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TRANSCULTURAL FLOWS FROM JAPAN TO THE
NORTH EAST OF ENGLAND 1862-1913:
*Visual and Material Culture in Relation to the Anglo-
Japanese Interaction*

MASSIMILIANO PAPINI

PhD

2020

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Northumbria at Newcastle for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy Research undertaken in the Faculty of Arts, Design & Social Sciences

Abstract

This thesis investigates the relationship between Japan and Britain through the promotion, diffusion, reception, and appreciation of Japanese visual and material culture in the North East of England between 1862 and 1913, focusing on both art and design as well as high and popular culture. This regional study clearly demonstrates the nuanced ways in which the Anglo-Japanese transcultural relationship evolved during the Victorian period, – more so than previous art historical studies which focused broadly on Anglo-Japanese exchange or on the works of specific artists or designers. In addition to re-evaluating the international trade and diplomatic relation between the Asian country and the British region from a cultural standpoint, this study sheds light for the first time on the ways in which Japan, its culture, and its people were presented and domesticated in both urban and rural communities of the North East through images of Japan and Japanese objects. Rather than accepting a simplistic and strict dichotomy between “East” and “West,” Japanese visual and material culture has been analysed through the concept of transculturality, which facilitates the identification of the multiple – and occasionally contradictory – ways in which Japanese textiles, fans, screens, ceramics, and other decorative articles, have been discussed, purchased, displayed and consumed in different “contact zones” such as regional newspapers, public events, charity bazaars, shops, and domestic interiors.

This thesis argues that the dualism between a pre-modern and unchanging “Old” Japan and an industrialised and militaristic “New” Japan became a daily topic of much interest even in rural areas of the North East thanks to cultural mobilisers such as newspaper journalists, lecturers, museum curators, performers, companies of decorators, retailers, and authors of domestic advice literature. While reinforcing an unequal power relationship between the dominant British Empire and subaltern Meiji Japan, the resulting image of the Asian country was characterised by an ambiguity which not only favoured the diffusion of cosmopolitan liberalism, but also partly questioned strict dichotomies such as Self/Other and masculine/feminine encoded in the racial discourse concerning Japanese culture in Britain.

This comprehensive investigation of the multiple ways in which the North East was entangled with a transcultural phenomenon such as the European and American enthusiasm for everything Japanese opens new grounds of enquiry providing a more nuanced understanding of the everyday experience of foreign cultures in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods.

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Japanese Names

Japanese names are listed family name first, followed by personal names.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on the 3rd August 2017.

I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 85.281 words.

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Introduction

In 1984, the Japanese car manufacturer Nissan and the British government signed an agreement to build a car plant in Sunderland.¹ This foreign investment in the North East was perceived as a pivotal moment considering the industrial decline that this region was suffering due to the closure of local shipyards and coal mines throughout the twentieth century.² Lord Patrick Jenkin (1926-2016), a cabinet minister who had an active role in the various stages of the negotiation with Nissan representatives, suggests that the historic relationship between the North East and Japan could be divided into three principal phases.³ He circumscribed the first period as between the Japanese diplomatic visit to Newcastle-upon-Tyne in May 1862 and the official ending of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in August 1923. During this period, the Japanese government viewed the North East as an example of industrial excellence – especially in heavy engineering and coal mining. The second phase, from 1923 to 1953, was characterized by the decline of the economic relationship between the two countries, plateauing during World War Two. The third phase was initiated by the official visit of the Japanese Crown Prince Akihito at the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, reaching its zenith in the 1980s, when the North East was chosen for overseas investment by Japanese corporations, such as Nissan, Komatsu UK Ltd and Tabuchi Electric UK Ltd.⁴ Considering his personal background as Secretary of State for Industry until 1983, and as Secretary of State for the Environment from 1983 to 1985, as well as the role he played in negotiating Japanese investment in the North East of England, it is no surprise that for Jenkin the relationship between the North East and Japan had been mainly conditioned by economic and political factors since its earliest encounter.

In contrast to this interpretation, rather than focusing on a grand narrative about international trade and military alliances, this study is ultimately concerned with how Japan was encountered in the North East of England. Accordingly, the main question addressed in this research is: *What does the visual and material culture of the transcultural flows between Japan and the North East of England reveal about the sharing, interpretation and transformation of*

¹ The chronologies of events are reported in Lord Patrick C. F. Jenkin, foreword in *Japan and the North East of England*, by Marie Conte-Helm (London: Athlone Press, 1989), xv-xvii.

² Cannadine, David, *Margaret Thatcher: A Life and Legacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

³ Jenkin, foreword, xiv.

⁴ Marie Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England: From 1862 to the Present Day* (London: Athlone, 1989), 136-165.

knowledge, design and cultural beliefs, practices or values between the British region and the Asian country? More specifically to the North East, this thesis also aims to provide an answer to a secondary research question: *What is the value of the focused study of the visual and material culture of this transcultural interaction and how does it relate to the cultural identity of the North East of England?*

In order to address these questions, global phenomena such as the international trade and the fascination with Japan must be tackled taking into consideration their agency in everyday life throughout the North East. Undertaken as a regional study, the reception of Japan in the British region allows a shedding of light on the nuanced ways in which the wider Anglo-Japanese transcultural relationship evolved during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. As Adrian Green and Anthony J. Pollard suggest:

Studying regions is necessary if we are to explain variation in experience and action. Regions appear as areas of variation; they are larger than the immediate locality but are not usually defined as administrative areas. They do not have a simple relationship to landscape or economic activity, but rather emerge as areas of cultural variation within wider society.⁵

A study of the extent to which a global phenomenon suchlike the fascination with Japan impacted on a specific British region – in this case the North East of England – reflects the intention to accept a certain amount of geographical diversification while avoiding the kinds of generalisations that might arise from discourses at a nationwide level, which would risk overpassing any sort of local distinctiveness.

By focusing on the mundane experience of Japan in the North East through visual and material culture, this research offers a thorough analysis of how such phenomena shaped the perception of Japanese culture among members of urban and rural communities in the region. As Michel de Certeau propounds in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1980), only through a clear understanding of daily practices is it possible to move beyond the simplistic assumption that people are merely passive “consumers.”⁶ Hence, it is by means of investigating how Japan was experienced day by day through Japanese visual and material culture that this thesis defines the ways in which the communities in the North East perceived and individualised the idea of Japan.

⁵ Adrian Green and Anthony James Pollard, “Introduction: Identifying Regions,” In *Regional Identities in North-East England, 1300–2000*, edited by Adrian Green and Anthony James Pollard (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), 5.

⁶ Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

These everyday practices ranged from ordinary to occasional activities, which in the presence of, or with allusion to Japanese visual and material culture, were transformed into transcultural encounters. Rather than just proving that artefacts manufactured in Japan were popular in the North East, this thesis aims to learn from analysing such objects the ways in which Japanese culture was promoted and perceived in the region. Everyday interactions – such as reading about Japan in newspapers or purchasing Japanese objects in local shops – are discussed in relation to less ordinary Japan-themed activities – such as public lectures, exhibitions, entertaining spectacles, and charity bazaars. Ranging from educational activities to popular culture events, taken together these transcultural encounters provide a comprehensive picture of how Japan was depicted and promoted in the North East.

This new perspective not only demonstrates that a transcultural exchange occurred in Britain's peripheries, but also more clearly testifies that the perception, appreciation, and promotion of Japan through visual and material culture during the late Victorian and Edwardian periods underwent a complex process of development, which can only be observed by considering at once diplomatic, economic, artistic, and popular culture interactions. In contrast with most scholarship that contemplates the Anglo-Japanese cultural relationship, which so often privileges individual actors such as artists, designers, and diplomats, or major events such as international exhibitions held in London, the focus on a single British region and its everyday encounters with Japan paves the way for an investigation of how a range of Japan-related elements interacted to alter the diverse impressions of the country in both the private and public spheres.

Framing the Research

To consider the ways in which different ideas of Japan developed in the North East, the time frame chosen for this study takes into account two pivotal events. On the 26th of May 1862, a group of Japanese diplomats arrived in Newcastle Upon Tyne, and despite information about Japan's opening up to the wider world being by that time common in newspapers published in the North East, this landmark served to establish a direct connection that in the following decades developed into a strong economic relationship, and further allowed the local community to see inhabitants of Japan in person for the first time. Just over fifty years later, in November 1913, a major Japanese art exhibition opened at Newcastle's Laing Art Gallery, which, in another first for the North East, attempted to dissociate the de-historicised image of

Japan from Japanese artistic tradition. To better understand the importance of these two events, however, further historical contextualisation is necessary.

Historically, the North East of England experienced various cultural interactions that contributed in shaping the region. For example, Anglo-Saxons, and later Vikings, and Normans left a tangible sign of their passage in North Eastern dialects.⁷ Moreover, after the Roman dominion, the Anglo-Saxon invasion led to the formation of the Kingdom of Northumbria (654-878) which extended from the Firth of Forth (now in Scotland) on the north to the Humber on the south.⁸ Later called Northumbria's Golden Age, this period was characterised by a blend of insular, Germanic, and Mediterranean influence, leading to the North East becoming an important intellectual and religious centre at that time.⁹ In the Middle Ages, the dualism between the two historic counties of Durham and Northumberland epitomised the "multiple, overlapping and conflicting associations and identities at plays,"¹⁰ namely the preservation of the memory of St. Cuthbert,¹¹ and the defence of the English border during the Anglo-Scottish wars.¹²

However, historians agree that the conception of the North East of England as a place of distinctive regional identity arises from its role as an industrial powerhouse in the nineteenth century.¹³ John Langton asserts that during "the mid-nineteenth century regional cultural consciousness reached its zenith,"¹⁴ which can be attributed to the formation of industrial regions.¹⁵ Norman McCord suggests that in the North East this process began in the early

⁷ Bill Griffiths, *A Dictionary of North East Dialect*, Vol. II (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Northumbria University Press, 2005), xi-xii.

⁸ For an introduction to the history of the Kingdom of Northumbria, see, David Rollason, *Northumbria, 500-1100: Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁹ Carol L. Neuman de Vegvar, *The Northumbrian Renaissance: A Study in the Transmission of Style* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1987); Margaret Coombe et al, eds., *Saints of North-east England, 600-1500*. Turnhout, 2017.

¹⁰ Antony James Pollard, introduction to *North-east England in the Later Middle Ages*, edited by Christian Liddy and Richard Britnell (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2005), 11.

¹¹ Christian Liddy, *The Bishopric of Durham in the Late Middle Ages: Lordship, Community and the Cult of St Cuthbert* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008).

¹² Richard Lomas, *County of Conflict: Northumberland from Conquest to Civil War* (Edinburgh: Tuckwell Press, 1996).

¹³ For an introduction to the North-East regional identity, see Robert Colls and Bill Lancaster, eds., *Geordies: Roots of Regionalism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992); Robert Colls, ed., *Northumbria: History and Identity 547-2000* (Chichester: Phillimore, 2007); Adrian Green and Anthony James Pollard, eds., *Regional Identities in North-East England, 1300-2000* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007)

¹⁴ John Langton, "The Industrial Revolution and the Regional Geography of England," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 9 (1984): 157.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 150-159.

nineteenth century, and the high degree of independence and autonomy that the region achieved by way of coal mining resulted in a distinctive discourse which grew to dominate its perception on the national stage.¹⁶ Later in the nineteenth century, other heavy industries began to flourish, which transformed the North East into a global model of industrial excellence. Chemical, iron, and steel production became particularly successful in Teesside, to the point that Middlesbrough was called “Ironopolis” because of its primacy in this field.¹⁷ The same could be said in relation to the shipbuilding industry, especially on the Tyne and Wear rivers.¹⁸

Considering that these technological advances attracted the attention of many foreign countries including Japan – which turned to the North East as an example of industrial excellence to emulate –, the idea of the North East questioned throughout this thesis is built upon, and in contrast to, this conception of the region as a mere industrial powerhouse. As discussed by Oliver Landrum regarding Newcastle, the economy of the main urban centre in the region was not exclusively dominated by heavy industry, but rather “developed more as a service and commercial centre for the surrounding industrial region.”¹⁹ This was the result of what Landrum has defined as “an integrated elite” of entrepreneurs who were simultaneously associated with industrial development as well as services and commerce, creating an “heavily interdependent” regional economy able to positively respond to any sort of challenge.²⁰

The area investigated in this study takes into consideration the historical borders of the two historic counties of Durham and Northumberland as well as the idea of the North East as an industrial region emerged during the nineteenth century (Figure 1). In addition to the Scottish Border to the North and the Pennines to the West, Middlesbrough and its surroundings are considered the southernmost point, representing a relevant comparison to the other main industrial poles such as in the Tyne and Wear areas. As a result, the encounter between British

¹⁶ Norman, McCord, *North-East England: The Region's Development 1760-1960* (London: Batsford, 1979); Norman McCord, “North East England: Some Points of Regional Interest,” *Region und Industrialisierung*, edited by Sidney Pollard (Göttingen: Vandenhock & Ruprecht, 1980). See also, Keith Wrightson, “Elements of Identity: The Remaking of the North-East, 1500-1760,” *Northumbria: History and Identity 547- 2000*, edited by Robert Colls (Chichester: Phillimore, 2007).

¹⁷ Minoru Yasumoto. *The Rise of a Victorian Ironopolis: Middlesbrough and Regional Industrialization* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011).

¹⁸ David Dougan, *The History of North East Shipbuilding* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1969).

¹⁹ Oliver Lendrum, “An Integrated Elite: Newcastle's Economic Development 1840–1914,” *Newcastle upon Tyne*, edited by Robert Colls and Bill Lancaster (Chichester: Phillimore, 2001), 27.

²⁰ Lendrum, “An Integrated Elite,” 27, 46

and Japanese culture is analysed through different perspective, such as market and industrial towns in both urban and rural areas.

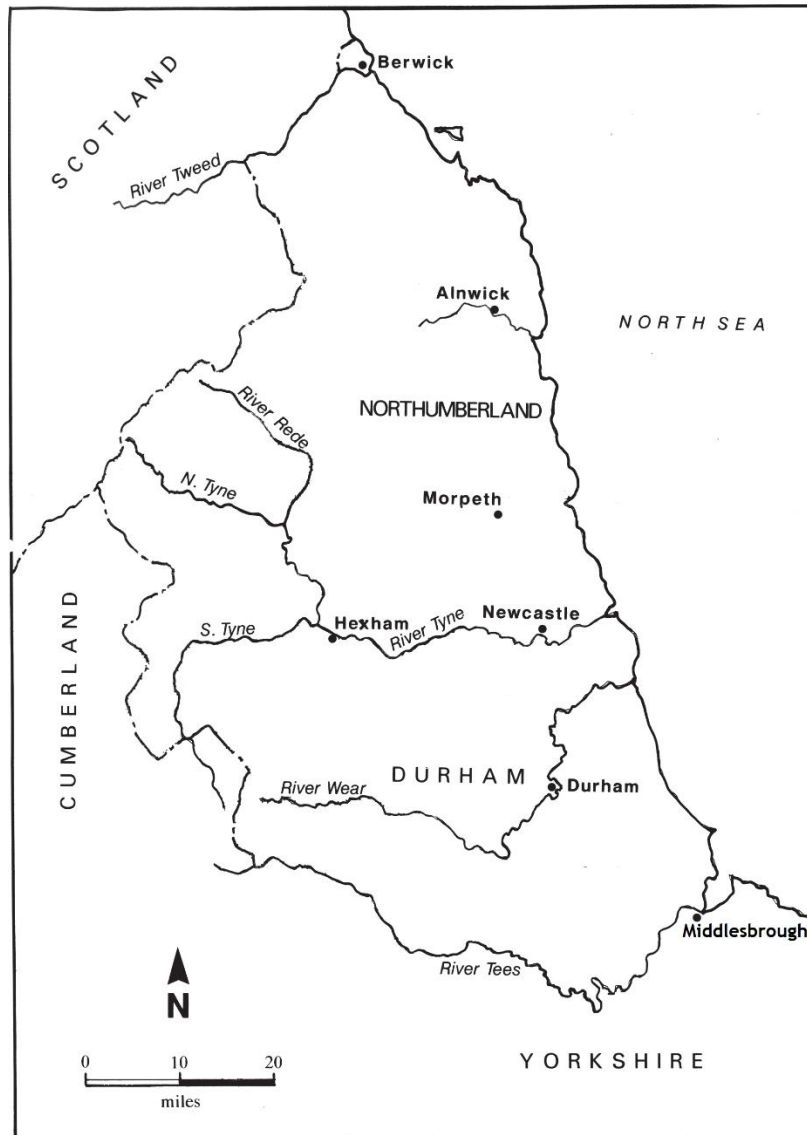


Figure 1 – Map of the North East of England.

With regard to Japan, the first contact between Europe and the Asian country occurred in 1543, when Portuguese explorers reached the island of Tanegashima, in the South of Japan.²¹ At that time, the political power in the country was mainly in the hands of the *shogun*, a military dictator appointed by the emperor, who held just a ceremonial role. Since the outbreak of the Ōnin War in 1467, however, the Ashikaga shogunate was on the verge of constant civil war. Peace in

²¹ Olof Lidin, *Tanegashima: The Arrival of Europe in Japan* (Copenhagen: Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, 2002).

Japan was re-established at the end of the sixteenth century, thanks to figures such as Oda Nobunaga (1534-1582), Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1537-1598), and Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616), who initially saw European technology, knowledge, and religion as positive forces.²² Especially in warfare campaigns, a crucial role was played by Portuguese firearms which were extensively employed on the battlefields, such as at the pivotal Battle of Sekigahara in 1600. In parallel, cultural exchanges with European countries after 1543 included also art,²³ and religion.²⁴ By 1579, for example, at the height of Christian missionary activity, there were about 130,000 converts among the Japanese.²⁵ However, everything changed in the early seventeenth century, when a new government was established under the Tokugawa shogunate (1600-1868). Afraid of the expansion of European power in East Asia, the Tokugawa's regime imposed isolationist measures by which no Western foreigners were allowed to land in Japan, with the only exception of the Dutch in Nagasaki.²⁶ This policy initiated a phase of Japanese history called *sakoku* [closed country], in which relations and trade between Japan and other countries were severely limited.²⁷

During this period of self-imposed isolation, specimens of Japanese manufacture such as pottery and lacquerware continued to reach Europe, but information about Japan arrived in Europe quite filtered. Under the monopoly of the Dutch merchants, specimens of Japanese lacquer and pottery became highly valued among aristocratic collectors, particularly during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the arrangement of porcelain rooms became a popular pursuit among kings and noblemen, including those of Great Britain.²⁸ However, as specific knowledge of Japan was not widely available, Japanese art objects tended to be associated with China, becoming part of "chinoiserie," an artistic and art-collecting phenomenon based on the appreciation and imitation of Chinese and other East Asian artistic

²² Asao Naohiro and Bernard Susser, "The Sixteenth-Century Unification," *The Cambridge History of Japan*, edited by John Whitney Hall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 40-95.

²³ Victoria Weston, ed., *Portugal, Jesuits, and Japan. Spiritual Beliefs and Earthly Goods* (Chestnut Hill, MA: McMullen Museum of Art, Boston College, 2013).

²⁴ Charles Ralph Boxer, *The Christian Century in Japan, 1549-1650* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951); Neil Fujita, *Japan's Encounter with Christianity: The Catholic Mission in Pre-modern Japan* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991).

²⁵ Brett Walker, "Foreign Affairs and Frontiers in Early Modern Japan: A Historiographical Essay," *Early Modern Japan: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 10, no. 2 (2002): 46.

²⁶ Gregory Irvine, *A Guide to Japanese Art Collections in the UK* (Amsterdam: Hotei, 2004), 14.

²⁷ For an introduction to the Japanese policy of seclusion known as *sakoku*, see, Michael Laver, *The Sakoku Edicts and the Politics of Tokugawa Hegemony* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2011).

²⁸ The early examples are documented in the first half of the seventeenth century, see, Oliver Impey, "Porcelain for Palaces," *Porcelain for Palaces: The Fashion for Japan in Europe, 1650-18750*, edited by Oliver Impey and John Ayers (London: Philip Wilson, 1990), 57.

traditions.²⁹ The most accurate accounts of Japan came through Dutch East India Company members such as physicians, naturalists or diplomats, who shared their experience in the country when they returned to Europe. Among these, the most important were Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716),³⁰ Carl Peter Thunberg (1743-1828),³¹ Isaac Titsingh (1745-1812),³² Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796-1866).³³ Notably, all of these men created their own collections of Japanese art,³⁴ and their publications were later used for reference by mid-Victorian authors.³⁵

The foreign perceptions of Japan changed dramatically in the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Japanese self-imposed isolation was brought to an end after almost two centuries. In 1853 Commodore Matthew Perry, an officer of the United States military navy, led a fleet of four warships into the bay of Edo³⁶ in order to convince the Tokugawa shogunate to open Japanese ports to American trade. Unable to reject this proposal due to the Perry's superior military force, Japan and the United States signed official treaties in 1854 and 1858, followed by Great Britain, France, Russia, and the Netherlands, which proposed similar agreements to the Japanese, all of which were accepted. Identical in content, these treaties were characterized by the fact that Japan was forced to concede many of its sovereignty rights.³⁷ The most detrimental clauses of these, so-called, *unequal treaties* included non-reciprocal

²⁹ For an introduction on chinoiserie, see, Hugh Honour, *Chinoiserie* (London: John Murray, 1961).

³⁰ Engelbert Kaempfer, *Kaempfer's Japan: Tokugawa Culture Observed*, translated by Beatrice Bodart-Bailey (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999).

³¹ Timon Screech *Japan Extolled and Decried: Carl Peter Thunberg and Japan* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2005).

³² Timon Screech, *Secret Memoirs of the Shoguns: Isaac Titsingh and Japan, 1779-1822* (London: Routledge, 2006).

³³ Arnulf Thiede et al., *Philipp Franz von Siebold and His Era Prerequisites, Developments, Consequences and Perspectives* (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer, 2000).

³⁴ Part of the Kaempfer's collection is in the British Museum; Thunberg's is in Etnografiska Museet in Stockholm; part of the Titsingh's collection of Japanese books is in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris; and Siebold's is in Japan Museum SieboldHuis, Leiden. Deborah Johnson, "Japanese Prints in Europe before 1840," *The Burlington Magazine* 124, no. 951 (1982).

³⁵ Gordon Daniels, "Elites, Governments and Citizens: Some British Perceptions of Japan, 1850-2000," *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations 1600-2000. Vol. V*, edited by Gordon Daniels and Chushichi Tsuzuki (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 3.

³⁶ Edo is the old name of Tokyo.

³⁷ Hisahiko Okazaki, *From Uruga to San Francisco. A Century of Japanese Diplomacy, 1853-1952* (Tokyo: Japan Echo Inc, 2007), 49-50.

extraterritoriality – valid for Western citizens in Japan, but not the opposite –, and the Western control over the custom duties in Japan.³⁸

Japan's intention to modify the unequal treaties was clear from the beginning of the Meiji period (1868-1912), when the Tokugawa shogunate fell and imperial rule was restored.³⁹ Following the advice of Guido Verbeck (1830-1898), a Dutch missionary who taught at the *Yōgakusho* (School for Western Studies) in Nagasaki, the Meiji government organized a diplomatic mission to Europe and the United States in order to study Western industrial excellences, but also to revise the unequal treaties.⁴⁰ In 1871, the Iwakura Mission left Yokohama and did not return before the 1873, visiting many nations including the United States, Great Britain, France, Russia, Holland, Italy. While treaties were not revised, the information gathered by the Japanese diplomats in America and Europe formed the basis of the following economic and social reforms symbolised by the national slogan *fukoku kyōhei* [enrich the state, strengthen the military], reaching important steps in the late nineteenth century such as the ratification of Meiji Constitution in 1889.⁴¹ The level of civilisation reached by Japanese society further attests that Japan was not the same country encountered by Perry in the mid-nineteenth century and made it further apparent that the unequal treaties should have been revised. The new agreement was signed with the British Empire in July 1894, followed by a new treaty with the United States in November of the same year, and with the other countries in the following months.⁴²

The image of Japan on the world stage incontrovertibly changed at the turn of the century. The aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), for example, revealed Japan to be a military power in its own right and prompted the Western Powers to reconsider their plans in East Asia. In response to Japanese victory, the Triple Intervention (Russia, Germany, and France) prevented Japan from ratifying the annexation of the Liaodong Peninsula from the Chinese

³⁸ As demonstrated by Michael Auslin, these great concessions by the Japanese negotiators aimed to avoid being colonised, succeeding to defend the “ideological, intellectual, and physical boundaries between [Japanese] and Westerners.” Michael Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), 9-10.

³⁹ For an overview of the Meiji restoration into broader world history, see, Mark Ravina, *To Stand with the Nations of the World: Japan's Meiji Restoration in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

⁴⁰ Ian Ruxon, “The Mission's Aims, Objective & Results.” *The Iwakura Mission in America and Europe: A New Assessment*, edited by Ian Nish (Richmond: Curzon, 1998), 55.

⁴¹ See, Janet Hunter and Shinya Sugiyama, “Anglo-Japanese Economic Relations in Historical Perspective, 1600-2000: Trade and Industry, Finance, Technology and Industrial Challenge,” *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000. Vol. IV*, edited by Janet Hunter and Shinya Sugiyama (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

⁴² Hisahiko Okazaki, *From Uruga to San Francisco. A Century of Japanese Diplomacy, 1853-1952* (Tokyo: Japan Echo Inc, 2007), 51.

Empire.⁴³ This interference brought Japan closer to the British Empire given their shared opposition to Russian expansionism in Asia. Signed in 1902, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance bound Britain and Japan to assist one another in safeguarding their respective interests in China and Korea, and to support each other in case of war against more than one opponent.⁴⁴ Knowing that France would not offer direct help to Russia lest Britain be drawn into the conflict, Japan launched a surprise attack against Russian warships at Port Arthur (Lüshu, China) in 1904, and after eighteenth months of fighting, became the first Asian country to defeat a European power.⁴⁵

The end of Japan's self-imposed isolation in 1854 and the ensuing geopolitical changes also affected the availability of Japanese art and design in Britain, and the idea of Japan in Victorian popular culture. The opening of Japanese ports to Europe and the United States increased exports to Britain of artistic objects, which became a desirable and affordable commodity in the following years. The success of the Japanese Court at the London International Exhibition of 1862 further popularised the practice of collecting specimens of Japanese art and design, which, with their use of asymmetry and highly decorative harmonies of colour, were praised by art critics, artists, and designers for their original composition.⁴⁶ Despite such novelties, commentators began to link Japan and its artistic traditions to the Middle Ages, which were romantically thought of as a kind of golden age. For example, the architect William Burges (1827-1881), a Gothic Revivalist, wrote that "truly the Japanese Court is the real medieval court in the Exhibition."⁴⁷ In an article published 1869, Algernon B. Mitford (1837-1916), who served as second secretary to the British Legation in Japan from 1866 to 1869, described a samurai warrior committing *seppuku* (or *hara-kiri*), a form of ritual suicide by disembowelment, as a "brave, chivalrous man" and "noble gentleman,"⁴⁸ echoing the respectful tone which at that time was commonly associated with the honourable deeds of Anglo-Saxon knights.⁴⁹ Through

⁴³ Sarah Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895: Perception, Power, and Primacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 287, 290-293, 308, 319-321, 323, 328; Frank Ikle, "The Triple Intervention: Japan's Lesson in the Diplomacy of Imperialism," *Monumenta Nipponica* 22, no. 1 (1967): 122.

⁴⁴ Phillips Payson O'Brien, ed., *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922* (London: Routledge, 2004); Ian Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires 1894-1907* (London: Athlone Press, 1966).

⁴⁵ Ian Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Routledge, 1985), 201.

⁴⁶ Toshio Watanabe, *High Victorian Japonisme* (Bern: P. Lang), 153

⁴⁷ William Burges, "The International Exhibition," *Gentleman's Magazine* 213 (1862): 11.

⁴⁸ Algernon B. Mitford, "The Execution by Hari-Kiri," *Cornhill Magazine* 20 (November 1869), 551.

⁴⁹ Anna Jackson, "Imagining Japan: The Victorian Perception and Acquisition of Japanese Culture," *Journal of Design History* 5, no. 4 (1992): 249.

this strong link with the Middle Ages, the image of Japan as reflected in its manufacture of decorative and artistic objects was one of a static and immutable society able to satisfy the late Victorian desire to re-enact a pre-industrial Britain.⁵⁰

After the Meiji Restoration in 1869, this de-historicised representation of Japan was confronted with the rapid transformation that the country underwent. Japan's adoption of Western political, social, and economic organisation was perceived in Britain as a necessary step towards modernisation, but also as a threat to the authenticity of Japanese culture and its artistic production. On the one hand, there was the nation embracing a modernising process by reforming its pre-industrial society to emulate the Western model, which functioned as a signifier of civilisation; on the other was the "singular" and "mysterious" land viewed by Victorians as a means of romanticised escapism from the complexities of life in an industrialised society. This incongruous representation led to a dichotomy between the modern, "New" Japan and the traditional, "Old" Japan, which characterised the global discourse concerning the country in the following decades.

Being the popularity of Japan often associated with the refined quality of Japanese manufacture, the dualism between "Old" and "New" Japan also affected the perception and appreciation of Japanese decorative objects. As early as 1873, Christopher Dresser (1834-1904), a designer and early British Japoniste, rued that "[d]uring the last ten years the art-works of Japan have deteriorated to a lamentable extent," a decline he imputed to Japan's contact with Europe and the United States.⁵¹ The idea that Western nations were tainting Japanese artistry did not however prevent British firms and art dealers (including Dresser himself) from investing in and selling Japanese art and decorative objects over the following decades, which widened the availability of such articles to people beyond the usual circles of artists, designers, and intellectuals. The critical and commercial success of William Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan's operetta *The Mikado* (1885) further confirmed that the British fascination with an idealised image of Japan had become an established part of Victorian popular culture. Thus, despite its acknowledged presence, the dualism between "Old" and "New" Japan did not inhibit

⁵⁰ Ibid., 250-252. See also, John MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 124-129; Olive Checkland, *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan, 1868-1912* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 187-195.

⁵¹ Christopher Dresser, *Principles of Decorative Design* (London: Cassell, Peter, & Galpin, 1882), 161.

enthusiasm for “everything Japanese” among an increasingly diverse audience in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The dualism between “New” and “Old” Japan was recognised also in the North East of England during the period under examination. With regard to the modern image of Japan, Marie Conte-Helm observes that the relationship between the country and the North East of England in the late Victorian period was characterised by Japan looking at the British region as a model of advanced and successful industry.⁵² The first official contact between Japan and the North East occurred in 1862, when Japanese diplomats paid a visit to Newcastle Upon Tyne. The main reason for this diplomatic mission was to gather as much information as possible on the local industries and collieries, thereby furthering the modernisation process in Japan. In 1865, guns and ammunition designed by William Armstrong (1810-1900), a Newcastle industrialist, started to be purchased by the Japanese.⁵³ At that time, Japan was facing a civil war between forces in favour of the restoration of the imperial political power and the Tokugawa shogunate. The victory of the imperial faction in 1868 signalled the beginning of the Meiji Era (1868-1912) and led to the formation of a new government which further invested in the industrialisation of the country.

The North East of England was also highly considered by Japan with regard to shipbuilding and naval training, which made Japanese a not-uncommon sight for people in the North East. As early as in the 1870s, for example, Japanese students were commonly sent to the British region as part of their apprenticeship.⁵⁴ In addition, Japanese officers, engineers, and ship crews often sojourned in the region.⁵⁵ Their presence in Newcastle wearing Western-style clothes

⁵² Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 6-7.

⁵³ Sugiyama, Shinya. “Thomas B. Glover: A British Merchant in Japan, 1861–70.” *Business History* 26, no. 2 (1984): 123-124.

⁵⁴ In the 1870s Mizutani Rokuro and Matsuda Kinjiro were sent to Hawthorn Leslie, a Newcastle shipyard. Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 34-35. Baisaku Fukao was placed at Raylton Dixon & Co. in Middlesbrough, another shipbuilding facility. Baisaku resided in Middlesbrough for just a few months before dying in an accident in 1873. According to the diary of Tōgō Heihachirō, who later become of the hero of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), also Harada Sosuke, Hiramoto Shujiro were in Newcastle in the same period. Andrew Cobbing, *The Japanese Discovery of Victorian Britain: Early Travel Encounters in the Far West*. Richmond: Curzon, 1998), 123,142. For an introduction to Tōgō and its relationship with the North East of England, see, Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 47-48.

⁵⁵ For example, Haji Sotojiro and Nihara Jiro oversaw the construction of the *Naniwa-kan* and *Takachiho-kan*, while Matsuo Tsurukaro and Yamamoto Ryotaro oversaw the *Yoshino* (1892-1893) and *Tatsuta* (1893-1894). *Ibid.*, 32, 37.

further reinforced the modern connotation of the new image of Japan even among the people not directly linked to the shipbuilding industry.

In the 1880s and 1890s, Japan became an important client for heavy industries in the North East of England. Commencing in 1885, the Japanese Imperial Navy ordered from Newcastle shipyards the warships that were to be important in the military victories of Japan over China (1894-1895) and Russia (1904-1905).⁵⁶ Moreover, the Japanese government and Japanese private companies started to buy a large amount of pig iron from Middlesbrough furnaces on the River Tees, which were among the major producers worldwide.⁵⁷ It is probable that for this reason, in 1896 a semi-governmental shipping company, Nippon Yusen Kaisha, decided to establish a new European route, for which Middlesbrough became the main loading port in the UK.⁵⁸ It is not surprising that a few years later, Middlesbrough was chosen to host an honorary Japanese consul.⁵⁹

These commercial and diplomatic contacts had a profound impact on the local community in the North East,⁶⁰ however, the popular image of Japan in the region was informed not only by economic and political encounters, but also by a variety of cultural encounters such as public lectures, entertaining spectacles, and charity bazaars, which, in contrast to the industrial relationship, were linked to the consumption of Japanese decorative objects and the fascination with “Old” Japan. Numerous public lectures were organised not only in major towns such as Newcastle or Durham, but also in small rural villages, such as Humshaugh, near Hexham.⁶¹ While the topics were quite diverse, artefacts such as Japanese textiles, fans, and other decorative objects were usually employed as visual aids by the invited speakers. Additionally, various troupes of Japanese acrobats began to arrive in the North East from the 1860s while touring Britain.⁶² Tannaker Buhicrosan, famous for having organised the Japanese Native

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 20-51.

⁵⁷ *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough*, 3 September 1886, 4.

⁵⁸ William D. Wray, *Mitsubishi and the N.Y.K., Business Strategy in the Japanese Shipping Industry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 315-318.

⁵⁹ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 99, 111.

⁶⁰ For example, the arrival of the Japanese mission in 1862, anticipated by numerous newspaper articles, represented for many locals the first chance to see inhabitants of the Land of the Rising Sun in person, and a large crowd welcomed the diplomats at Newcastle Central station in order to admire their exotic dresses and hairstyles. *Newcastle Courant*, 30 May 1862, 2.

⁶¹ *Newcastle Journal*, 1 April 1862, 4.

⁶² Among the early acrobatic troupes that reached the North East of England, I can mention the Great Dragon. *Newcastle Journal*, 3 October 1867, 2.

Village in London in 1885,⁶³ was the manager of the Royal Tycoon Troupe, whose tour reached various towns in the North East from 1869 to 1883.⁶⁴ In order to promote his spectacles, from 1877 Tannaker advertised the giveaway of a Japanese “curiosity” to every attendee who purchased a ticket, testifying the widespread desirability of Japanese decorative objects.⁶⁵ A similar strategy was also employed at philanthropic events. To attract benefactors and donors, various religious organisations opened Japan-themed charity bazaars, in which it was possible to admire Japanese decorations as well as purchase Japanese articles.⁶⁶ Overall, these public events further demonstrate that the enthusiasm for Japanese culture was inextricably tied with the consumption of Japanese decorative goods, and the analysis this aspect in relation to the international trade between Japan and the North East represents the main focus of each chapter of this thesis.

Literature Review

Prior to Marie Conte-Helm’s *Japan and the North East of England* (1989), which is the first and till now only detailed account of the historical relationship between Japan and this British region, a few other scholars investigated certain aspects of the trade between Japan and the North East in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. The cultural discourse was however not part of their considerations. The Japanese role in the shipbuilding industry in the North East was briefly discussed in David Dougan’s *The History of the North East Shipbuilding* (1968), underling that the Japanese naval victory against Russia in 1905 (in which Armstrong’s cruisers played a crucial role) was instrumental in the subsequent increase of warships orders in Elswick by other clients.⁶⁷ In 1984, William Wray published *Mitsubishi and the NYK, 1870-1914*, a study that looks at the history of Nippon Yusen Kaisha, a Japanese shipping company that in the 1896 chose Middlesbrough as her main loading port in England.⁶⁸ As they are both studies of business history, they remain valuable sources for statistical data concerning the impact of Japanese orders to shipyards in the North East, as well as of archival information on the progress of the negotiations which led to Middlesbrough’s selection as the chief trading port for Japanese

⁶³ Sir Hugh Cortazzi, *Japan in Late Victorian London: The Japanese Native Village in Knightsbridge and 'The Mikado', 1885* (Norwich: Sainsbury Institute, 2009).

⁶⁴ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 2 March 1869, 1; *Northern Echo*, 27 June 1883, 1.

⁶⁵ *Northern Echo*, 31 May 1877, 1; *Jarrow Express*, 4 August 1877, 3.

⁶⁶ A total of 16 Japan-themed bazaars were organised all over the region between 1882 and 1898. For example, in Darlington, *Newcastle Courant*, 27 October 1882, 5; Durham, *Durham County Advertiser*, 30 May 1884, 8; or Middlesbrough, *Northern Echo*, 30 October 1889, 1.

⁶⁷ Dougan, *The History of North East Shipbuilding*, 91.

⁶⁸ Wray, *Mitsubishi and the N.Y.K.*

goods. However, these works provide little if any insight into the role that the global idea of Japan might have had in the popular reception of those economic decisions.

As anticipated, the first scholar who attempted to contextualise the Anglo-Japanese cultural encounter occurred in the North East was Marie Conte-Helm, who moved to the region in 1979, working as Head of the Japanese Studies at the University of Sunderland.⁶⁹ In 1981, Conte-Helm curated an exhibition which investigated the cultural encounter between Britain and Japan from 1853 to 1914.⁷⁰ Located at the Hatton Gallery in Newcastle, a section of the exhibition was devoted to illustrate the commercial link between Armstrong's Elswick Company in Newcastle and Japanese navy, as well as referencing the Japanese art collection formed by Albert Howard Higginbottom (1849-1930), a local wine and spirit merchant. Considering that at that time the late Victorian encounter between British and Japanese culture in the region was almost completely eclipsed by the negative perception of Japan due to the Second World War, Conte-Helm's exhibition marked the beginning of a new phase which was characterised by the effort to recontextualise the Anglo-Japanese encounter occurred in the North East during the late Victorian period.

Especially after the Nissan investment in Sunderland in 1984, English and Japanese leaders felt the necessity to rediscoverer and promote the region's historical relationship with Japan. In terms of academic publications, this wish was fulfilled by Marie Conte-Helm, who published *Japan and the North East of England* in 1989, a pivotal book that investigates the economic and cultural relationship between Japan and the North East from 1862 to the year of publication. Conte-Helm provides a historical overview of more than one century, focusing in particular on the flourishing maritime trade in the late nineteenth century, the troubled years after the Second World War, and the resurgence of the mutually beneficial relationship from the late 1970s, when Japanese companies re-started to invest in the North East. Conte-Helm entitles her last chapter "A relationship reversed?," concluding:

There is a sense of coming full circle in these developments. The North East aided Japan's progress towards modernization in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century. Today, Japanese investment is contributing to the revitalization of the region that followed a very different course in the post-war period.⁷¹

⁶⁹ After this appointment, Conte-Helm directed the East Asian Developments at Northumbria University.

⁷⁰ Marie Conte-Helm, *In the Eye of the West: The British Experience of Japan 1858-1914* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Hatton Gallery, 1981).

⁷¹ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East*, 195.

The presence of the question mark must not be thought to signify doubtfulness, but rather the consciousness that the world around the two countries changed to such a great degree that any binary comparison between the first and third phases would be ahistorical.

With regard to the Victorian and Edwardian periods, Conte-Helm brought aspects of the cultural exchange between Japan and the North East to light for the first time, including the early interest from the locals in Japanese culture and artistic traditions. Public lectures about Japan were delivered in cultural institutions throughout the North East from the 1850s,⁷² while the arrival of *The Mikado* in Newcastle in October 1885, just six months after its March premiere in London, further highlight that the fascination with Japan reached the region without significant delay.⁷³ In addition, Conte-Helm recognises how the two antithetic souls associated with Japan, the delicate *geisha* and the aggressive *samurai*, coexisted with no conflict in the regional Japanese collections, concluding that this “contradictory perception of Japan [...] persisted into the twentieth century.”⁷⁴ However, although various public events and collectors are mentioned, Conte-Helm does not speculate to what extent the local interest in Japan and consumption of Japanese decorative objects was diffused among the region, or whether it was limited to the towns linked to Japan by the international trade. This unanswered question represents part of the deficit in knowledge that this thesis aims to redress.

Excluding the article written by Conte-Helm in 1999 centred on the Japanese community in Middlesbrough during the inter-war period,⁷⁵ which mostly reshaped the information already provided in her book, no other publication has been published with the cultural relationship between Japan and the North East in Victorian and Edwardian time as the main topic.⁷⁶ Of the more recent studies of Anglo-Japanese relations, all but a few mention the North East only briefly, and when doing so reference Conte-Helm’s book without adding relevant new material

⁷² In December 1852 C. T. Downing delivered two lectures entitled “Empire of Japan” at the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society. *Ibid.*, 55-56.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

⁷⁵ Marie Conte-Helm, “Middlesbrough’s ‘Forgotten Japanese’: The Japanese Community in Middlesbrough during the Inter-war Period,” *Immigrants & Minorities* 18, no. 1 (1999): 49-61.

⁷⁶ In contrast, numerous books and journal articles were published with regard to the Japanese investment in the North East of England. Among the many, see, Peter Wickens, *The Road to Nissan: Flexibility, Quality, Teamwork* (London: Macmillan, 1987); John Holloway, “The Red Rose of Nissan,” *Capital & Class* 11, no. 2 (1987): 142-164; Philip Garrahan and Paul Stewart, *The Nissan Enigma: Flexibility at Work in a Local Economy* (London and New York: Mansell, 1992); Judith Kenner Thompson and Robert R. Render, “Nissan UK: A Worker’s paradox?,” *Business Horizons* 38, no. 1 (1995): 48-58.

on the late Victorian and Edwardian periods,⁷⁷ with a few exceptions.⁷⁸ With the appointment of Marie Conte-Helm as Director General of the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation in 1999, and her consequent moving away from the North East, the interest on the historical relationship between Japan and that English region ended up again in the oblivion for almost 15 years.

In the second half of the 2010s, however, this approach began to change. In 2015 a small exhibition at the Oriental Museum in Durham entitled *Nissan: 30 years* partly addressed the longstanding relationship between Japan and the North East, while focusing on the impact that the Japanese car manufacturing company had on the local community during the previous three decades.⁷⁹ In 2016-2017, a multi-disciplinary initiative called *Project Godie: Revealing a Forgotten Chapter of North East History* specifically explored North East's strong links with Japan. Named after the baby son of two Japanese performers from the Tannaker's acrobatic troupe who passed away aged fifteen months in 1873 and was later buried in a cemetery in the North East, the heritage project included dancing and music performances, as well as an exhibition at Newcastle's Discovery Museum.⁸⁰ Similarly, in 2017 an exhibition at the Dorman Museum in Middlesbrough entitled *From Tokyo to the Tees* celebrated the 140th anniversary of the Christopher Dresser's visit to Japan in 1877 as well as the trade relationship between the town and country, which resulted in the establishment of a Japanese community in Middlesbrough in the early twentieth century.⁸¹ Albeit small initiatives, such projects attempted

⁷⁷ Conte-Helm's book is referenced in Cobbing, *The Japanese Discovery of Victorian Britain: Early Travel Encounters in the Far West*; Keiko Itoh, *The Japanese Community in Pre-war Britain: From Integration to Disintegration* (London: Curzon, 2001); Andrew Cobbing et al., *Kawada Ryōkichi, Jeanie Eadie's Samurai: The Life and Times of a Meiji Entrepreneur and Agricultural Pioneer* (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2006); and also in publications related to North-East maritime history such as Graeme J. Milne, *North East England, 1850-1914: The Dynamics of a Maritime-industrial Region* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 44; or to prominent regional figures such as Lord Armstrong, Heald, *William Armstrong: Magician of the North*.

⁷⁸ Sue Thompson published in 1991 a journal article with new information about the Japanese collection at the Bowes Museum, Sue Thompson, "Japanese export art at the Bowes Museum," *Arts of Asia* 21, no. 5 (1991): 115-124; while Gregory Irvine briefly discuss the Japanese collections at the Alnwick Castle and Wallington, which were not mentioned in Conte-Helm's book. Irvine, *A Guide to Japanese Art Collections in the UK*, 163, 167. Lastly, in his historical analysis of the Kamaishi Ironworks (Iwate Prefecture, Japan), David Wittner clarifies the role played by a company from Stockton-on-Tees in helping the Meiji government to set up a blast furnace in the mid-1870s. Wittner, David G. *Technology and the Culture of Progress in Meiji Japan* (London: Routledge, 2007), 85-87.

⁷⁹ For further information about the exhibition and its workshop, see James Sebright and Rachel Cochrane, *Nissan: 30 years On*, (Durham: Oriental Museum, Durham, 2015), <https://www.dur.ac.uk/oriental.museum/whatson/details/?id=24750> (accessed 1/12/2020).

⁸⁰ For further information about *Project Godie*, see Adam Denton and Nicole Vivien Watson, *Project Godie*, (Newcastle Upon Tyne, 2016), <http://www.projectgodie.org.uk> (accessed 11/15/2016).

⁸¹ For further information about the exhibition, see, *Tokyo to the Tees: Middlesbrough and Japan* (Middlesbrough: Dorman Museum, 2017) <https://www.jlgc.org.uk/en/international-exchange/tokyo-to-the-tees-exhibition-on-middlesbrough-and-japan/> (accessed 13/09/2020).

to rekindle an awareness of the historical relationship between Japan and the North East, focusing on two of the many transcultural encounters occurred in the late Victorian and Edwardian period.

Excluding these exhibitions, it appears clear that only few academic studies attend specifically to the transcultural relationship between Japan and the North East. However, there is an abundance of scholarship analysing Anglo-Japanese cultural and artistic interaction in the nineteenth century. Among the earliest scholars, Elizabeth Aslin has addressed this phenomenon in her book, *The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Nouveau* (1969), in which she strongly asserts the crucial role played by Japan regarding the Aesthetic Movement:

The second new influence was that of Japanese art which was to have widespread effect on the domestic arts in the latter part of the Victorian period and was one of the most important contributory factors in the Aesthetic Movement.⁸²

In addition to extending her analysis of the Japanese influence over the prominent British designers linked to the Aesthetic Movement, such as Edward William Godwin (1833-1886) and Christopher Dresser, in the chapter entitled “The Japanese Taste,” Aslin theorises that the “cult of Japan” spread among different levels of society in three phases: in the 1860s when it was a matter for individual collectors and enthusiasts, in the 1870s when it spread “amongst informed people” and in the 1880s when the “movement became a mania.”⁸³ Using the North East of England as a case study, this thesis critically questions this strict periodisation, especially with regard to the trickle down model in which an elite group informs the tastes of a wider public; however, it cannot be denied that Aslin has successfully identified the 1880s as the decade in which the Japan mania reached its peak of popularity in Britain.

While Aslin has concentrated her focus on British decorative arts,⁸⁴ in 1872 Robin Spencer extends the discussion concerning the influence of Japanese artistic traditions to most of the visual arts performed in late Victorian Britain, such as painting, printmaking, architecture, and interior design. In his *The Aesthetic Movement, Theory and Practice* (1972), while discussing works painted by James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) and Albert Moore (1841-1893) or children’s books illustrations designed by Walter Crane (1845-1915), Spencer also highlights

⁸² Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Nouveau* (London: Elek, 1969), 33.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 79.

⁸⁴ Aslin’s decision which should be put in relation to her main expertise. At the time, she was appointed at the Circulation Department at the Victoria and Albert Museum, as Furniture curator.

how important was for those artists the first-hand experience of Japanese aesthetic principles through Japanese objects such as fans, screens, and prints.⁸⁵

From the 1970s, the academic discussion about the Japanese influence on European artistic movements through Japanese objects mushroomed, with a particular focus on the distinction between *Japonaiserie* and *Japonisme*. Coined in the second half of the nineteenth century, both terms are French neologisms created to describe the cultural phenomenon characterised by the passion for everything arrived from Japan after its opening to the West in 1854. Invented by Jules de Goncourt (1830-1870), “*Japonaiserie*” was firstly mentioned in a letter dated 1867, but the French intellectual never properly defined its meaning beyond suggesting a loose consonance with the already established term *Chinoiserie*, as well as occasionally employing *Japonaiserie* to describe the popularity of collecting practices concerning Japanese objects.⁸⁶ “*Japonisme*” firstly appeared in 1872,⁸⁷ when Philippe Burty (1830-1890), a French art critic, coined such term not only to identify the influence of Japanese objects in European artists, but also to promote the study of Japan, its art and its culture as a whole.⁸⁸ Drawing upon these two historical terms, in 1970 Mark Roskill conceptualises *Japonisme* as “the incorporation into Western art of devices of structure and presentation which match those found in actual Japanese works”, while *Japonaiserie* was a mere superficial “interest in Japanese motifs because of their decorative, exotic or fantastic qualities.”⁸⁹ Ultimately, for Roskill “*Japonaiserie* exists as a necessary antecedent of *Japonisme* – leading up to the latter and in due course giving place to it.”⁹⁰ As demonstrated by Toshio Watanabe, Roskill’s interpretation is simply historically inaccurate,⁹¹ however, its practicality has made it prevalent in academic studies concerning the

⁸⁵ Robin Spencer, *The Aesthetic Movement, Theory and Practice* (London: Studio Vista, 1972), 9, 28, 36, 45, 56-62, 76-78, 88-93, 133. To further emphasised the pivotal role played by Japan over the Aesthetic Movement, in 1872 Robin Spencer also organised an exhibition at the Fine Art Society, London, named *The Aesthetic Movement and the Cult of Japan*.

⁸⁶ The letter was addressed to Philippe Burty and it contains the verse “A revoir donc. Japonaiserie for ever” as a final greeting. Philippe Burty, *Maîtres et Petits Maîtres* (Paris: 1877), 274.

⁸⁷ Philippe Burty, “*Japonisme I*,” *La Renaissance Littéraire et Artistique* 1, no. 4, 18 May 1872, 25-26.

⁸⁸ The term was introduced to Britain by Burty himself, when he published an article entitled “*Japonisme*” in 1875 on *The Academy*. Philippe Burty, “*Japonisme*,” *The Academy*, 7 August 1875, 150-151.

⁸⁹ Mark Roskill, *Van Gogh, Gauguin and the Impressionist Circle* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1970), 57.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁹¹ “If there is a distinction, one might say that ‘*Japonaiserie*’ is mostly used in connection with actual Japanese objects, motifs and works of art, while ‘*Japonisme*’, as we saw in Burty’s use of it, rather means a pro-Japan attitude and its manifestation in the West. Though [...] the terms are not consistently used in either one or the other way.” Toshio Watanabe, “What is *Japonisme*? Terminology and Interpretation,” *Art of Japan, Japonismes and Polish-Japanese Art Relations*, edited by Agnieszka Kluczevska-Wójcik and Jerzy Malinowski, (Toruń: Polish Institute of World Art Studies & Tako Publishing House, 2012), 215-218.

impact of Japanese aesthetics on European and American artists and designers,⁹² neglecting the ongoing, entangled, and mutual influence between the popular consumption of Japonaiserie and the more “cerebral” Japonisme in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

In addition to supporting Roskill’s paradigm, the following academic discussions and early Japonisme studies during the 1970s and 1980s mainly focused on painters belonging to the French Impressionist and Post-Impressionist schools; while publication dedicated to the British context became rarer. For example, at the international symposium *Japonisme in Art*, which took place in Tokyo in December 1979 and convened experts from across the world, twelve of the twenty-one papers presented were exclusively focused on French artistic movements, while only three concerned topics associated with the British art scene.⁹³ The French context also remained predominant during the 1980s, when various scholars looked at new aspects with respect to the Japonisme phenomenon, such as Elisa Evett and Phylis Anne Floyd, who wrote about the critical reception of Japonisme.⁹⁴

In order to fill the gap of a comprehensive study regarding the Japanese influence over late nineteenth century British artists, in 1991 Watanabe Toshio published *High Victorian Japonisme*. The volume offers not only a deep insight about the British context across multiple mediums including painting, architecture and design, but it also identifies that Japanese motifs were incorporated quite early in order to revitalise the contemporary British design as a whole, extending what Aslin and Spencer have suggested with regard to the Aesthetic Movement.⁹⁵

Following Watanabe, different scholars started to look in detail at prominent British figures that in the late Victorian period demonstrated interest in Japanese art. For example, Christopher Dresser and how Japanese aesthetics influenced his work has been extensively discussed in two

⁹² Geneviève Lacambre, *Le Japonisme* (Paris: Editions de la Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1988); Lionel Lambourne, *Japonisme, Cultural Crossings between Japan and the West* (New York: Phaidon Press, 2005).

⁹³ Haga Tōru, “The diplomatic Background of Japonisme: the case of Sir Rutherford Alcock”; Spencer, Robin “Whistler and Japan: work in progress;” Buchanan, William “Japanese influences on the Glasgow Boys and Charles Rennie Mackintosh;” both in *Japonisme in Art: An International Symposium*, edited by Chisaburō Yamada (Tokyo: Committee for the Year 2001, 1980).

⁹⁴ Elisa Evett, *The Critical Reception of Japanese Art in Late Nineteenth Century Europe* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Research Press, 1982); Phylis Anne Floyd, “Japonisme in Context: Documentation, Criticism, Aesthetic Reactions,” PhD Thesis (University of Michigan, 1983). See also, Phylis Anne Floyd, “Documentary Evidence for the Availability of Japanese Imagery in Europe in Nineteenth-Century Public Collections,” *The Art Bulletin* 68, no. 1 (1986): 105-141.

⁹⁵ This was enhanced the following year with the exhibition curated by Watanabe and Satō Tomoko at the Barbican Art Gallery, which represents the perfect compendium to Watanabe’s book. Toshio Watanabe and Tomoko Satō, *Japan and Britain: An Aesthetic Dialogue*, (London: Lund Humphries, 1991).

monographs published in 1993 by Stuart Durant⁹⁶ and Widar Halén.⁹⁷ Furthermore, the oeuvre of the illustrator Aubrey Beardsley (1872-1898) has been analysed by Linda Gertner Zatin, who identifies the Japanese erotic prints (*shunga*) owned by Beardsley as being among the inspirations for his exaggerated, stark, calligraphic style.⁹⁸ In 2003 Ono Ayako published *Japonisme in Britain*, a book that, in contrast to the Watanabe's *High Victorian Japonisme*, concentrates on four artists – James Whistler and Mortimer Menpes, both of whom were mostly based in London, and George Henry and Edward Atkinson Hornel, from Glasgow. While they did not openly question Roskill's hierarchical distinction between Japonaiserie and Japonisme, these studies expanded our knowledge of how increasing accessibility to Japanese artefacts contributed to the artistic development of selected British painters, architects, and designers. During the final quarter of the century in particular, when anyone living in major British towns was able to purchase Japanese artistic and decorative objects at the local antique dealer or curio-shop, each artist selectively incorporated the Japanese attributes which best fitted their own sensibility.

While collecting and consuming Japanese artistic and decorative objects during the late Victorian period was far from being a prerogative of small circles of artists and intellectuals, the commerce of Japanese material in Britain has yet to be fully investigated beyond the activities of well-known retailers such as Liberty & Co., which opened in London in 1875.⁹⁹ As studies of the French and North American situations have revealed, many retailers surpassed simply dealing in Japanese art to carefully promote the appreciation of Japanese artistic traditions among a wider audience, by way of sophisticated shopping experiences. Following Gabriel Weisberg's seminal work, who firstly investigated the translational importance of art dealers such as Siegfried Bing (1838-1905),¹⁰⁰ in 2000 Max Put shed light on the ways in which Bing and Tadamasa Hayashi (1853-1906) transformed their Parisian shops into artistic hubs attended by painters, architects, sculptors, designers, collectors, and intellectuals.¹⁰¹ With

⁹⁶ Stuart Durant, *Christopher Dresser* (London: Academy Editions, 1993).

⁹⁷ Widar Halén, *Christopher Dresser: A Pioneer of Modern Design* (London: Phaidon Press, 1993).

⁹⁸ Linda Gertner Zatin, *Beardsley, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁹⁹ Alison Adburgham, *Liberty's. A Biography of a Shop* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975).

¹⁰⁰ Gabriel Weisberg, *Art Nouveau Bing: Paris Style 1900* (New York and Washington: Harry N. Abrams and the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service, 1986).

¹⁰¹ Max Put, *Plunder and Pleasure: Japanese Art in the West 1860-1930* (Leiden: Brill, 2000). With regard to Tadamasa, see also Brigitte Koyama-Richard, *Japon Rêve. Edmond de Goncourt et Hayashi Tadamasa* (Paris:

regard to the United States, Yamamori Yumiko in 2008 and Constance Chen in 2010 underline that at the turn of the century, the market for “high” Japanese art began to be dominated by art dealers of Japanese nationality such as Yamanaka Sadajirō (1866-1936) or Matsuki Bunkio (1867-1940), while popular Japanese “bric-a-brac” remained under the sphere of American retailers and firms such as A. A. Vantine & Co.¹⁰² Though these studies are principally concerned with the French and North American contexts, they are important reference points for the British reception of Japanese artistry, which scholars have investigated chiefly with regard to Liberty & Co., thereby neglecting the supporting roles played by other firms and retailers located in London and elsewhere in Britain.¹⁰³ This thesis aims to cover part of this gap, limiting to the North East of England.

Beyond publications concerning visual and decorative arts, it is important to mention three fundamental studies which investigate the idea of Japan in the West, published in three different decades. The first, *The Image of Japan: From Feudal Isolation to World Power, 1850-1905*, written by Jean-Pierre Lehmann in 1878, argues that the phenomenon of “Japonisme” should not be confined to the visual arts, but involved various aspects related to the popular culture.¹⁰⁴ The book discusses, for example, the way in which Japanese women were perceived in the West and how this bears fruit in such works as Pierre Loti’s *Madame Chrysanthème* and Puccini’s *Madame Butterfly*. The second is *Japan in the Victorian Mind* (1987) by Yokoyama Toshio, a pioneer study which analyses how Victorians understood Japanese culture during the period

Hermann, 2001). Concerning Bing, in 2005 Gabriel Weisberg investigates the transatlantic connotation of Bing’s endeavours, who extended his clientele to North American collectors of Japanese art such as Charles Lang Freer (1854-1919). Gabriel Weisberg, “Lost and Found: S. Bing’s Merchandising of Japonisme and Art Nouveau,” *19th and 20th Century Art Worldwide* 4, no. 2 (2005). Lastly, the gender aspect of the Parisian art market has been taken into account by Elizabeth Emery, who investigate the seminal role played by Madame Desoye in 2019. Elizabeth Emery, “Madame Desoye, ‘First Woman Importer’ of Japanese Art in Nineteenth-Century Paris,” *Journal of Japonisme* 5, no. 1 (2019): 1–46; see also, Elizabeth Emery, *Reframing Japonisme: Women and the Asian Art Market in Nineteenth-Century France, 1853–1914* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

¹⁰² Yumiko Yamamori, “Japanese Arts in America, 1895-1920, and the AA Vantine and Yamanaka Companies,” *Studies in the Decorative Arts* 15, no. 2 (2008): 96-126; Constance J. S. Chen, “Merchants of Asianness: Japanese Art Dealers in the United States in the Early Twentieth Century,” *Journal of American Studies* (2010): 19-46.

¹⁰³ See, Krista Lysack, *Come Buy, Come Buy: Shopping and the Culture of Consumption in Victorian Women’s Writing* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2008); Sonia Ashmore, “Liberty and Lifestyle: Shopping for Art and Luxury in Nineteenth-Century London,” *Buying for the Home: Shopping for the Domestic from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, edited by David Hussey and Margaret Ponsoyby (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), 73-90.

¹⁰⁴ Jean-Pierre Lehmann, *The Image of Japan. From Feudal Isolation to World Power 1850-1905* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1978).

between 1850 and 1880. Using archives of William Blackwood & Sons – a publisher of Edinburgh –, Yokoyama concludes that until the mid-1860s Japan was generally put in analogy with Britain, emphasising the closeness between the two nations; while during the following 10 years, writers tended to emphasise the opposite feeling, the “remoteness,” also with the scope of satirising Britain without overexposing themselves. From the mid-1870s, the tendency was to emphasise “singularity,” creating a romantic image of Japan as a fairyland.¹⁰⁵ A similar study was performed by William Hosley, but with two main differences: the context is the United States, and instead of Victorian literature, the author investigates the material culture associated with the popular craze for Japanese things.¹⁰⁶ In *The Japan Idea, Art and Life in Victorian America*, Hosley argues that after the Philadelphia Exposition (1876), and the consequent start of the Japan mania in North America, some Japanese and American industries produced objects that were specifically designed to cater to the Japan craze, rather than achieving high aesthetic quality. Hosley claims that due to their high popularity, these mass-produced items were equally as significant as refined specimens of Japanese art such as paintings, *ukiyo-e* prints, screens, etc. – which were affordable only to wealthy collectors – in shaping the image of Japan as a synonym of novelty and beauty, despite their limited refinement. These publications introduced concepts such as exoticism, cosmopolitanism, escapism, and imperialism in relation to the cultural dialogue between Japan and the West.

In the past three decades, scholars have discussed about the aforementioned themes, taking into consideration also Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978). In his ground-breaking book, Said theorises that Orientalism is a cultural construct which serves the West to deal with the generic East as a negative “Other,” but more importantly “for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient.”¹⁰⁷ With regard to this concept, the appreciation and consumption of Japanese objects in the Victorian period has been investigated thoroughly, creating two main lines of thought. The first sees in the Victorian enthusiasm towards Japan a complex scenario in which the relevant component of genuine admiration and longing for the exotic “Other” went beyond the “orientalist” label; while the second underlines how the dream-like representation

¹⁰⁵ Toshio Yokoyama, *Japan in the Victorian Mind: A Study of Stereotyped Images of a Nation, 1850-80* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987), 170-175.

¹⁰⁶ William Hosley, *The Japan Idea: Art and Life in Victorian America* (Hartford, Conn.: Wadsworth Atheneum, 1990).

¹⁰⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1978), 3.

of Japan through Victorian popular culture ultimately reinforces the notion of Western cultural superiority, justifying its position of dominance.

With regard to the first, the earliest scholars who addressed this Said's concept in the early 1990s have been Watanabe Toshio and Anna Jackson. In his study about the influence of Japanese art on late Victorian artists and designers, Watanabe asserts that the manner in which British architects or designers chose to utilise Japanese aesthetic ideas was not merely a kind of attempt to demonstrate the imperialist superiority of Western culture; on the contrary, even if in some case they just exploited the growing fascination with Japanese objects, they also skilfully incorporated elements inspired by Japan "in order to enhance the artistic character of an English vernacular interior. [...] not [...] to evoke Japan nor the Orient."¹⁰⁸ Anna Jackson adds that from the Vienna International Exposition in 1873 Japan made multiple attempts to define its own public image at the international expositions, thus the resulting vision of Japan should be considered a complex dialogue between Japanese and Western interlocutors.¹⁰⁹

The same approach is further theorised by John MacKenzie, who in his general analysis of Orientalism in various Western forms of artistic expression such as fine art, architecture, design, music, etc., argues that the relationship between East and West in these art fields was mainly grounded in admiration for the exotic.¹¹⁰ In regard to Japan, MacKenzie concludes that "the principles of Japanese art, so profoundly different from the received canons of the West, constituted a set of standards around which radical western artists could group."¹¹¹

Building upon Watanabe, Jackson, and MacKenzie, recent publications propose to take into consideration the dynamic role played by the idea of Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In *Longfellow's Tattoos, Tourism, Collecting and Japan* (2004), Christine Guth focuses on cross-cultural dynamics involving the ideology of tourism and cultural appropriation through cross-dressing and tattooing by Charles Longfellow, an American globetrotter who visited Japan multiple times in the 1870s and later in the century. As Guth highlights, Longfellow's longing for the exotic "Other" ultimately pointed at the complex and paradoxical nature of the Western idea of Japanese cultural authenticity. Echoing James

¹⁰⁸ Watanabe, *High Victorian Japonisme*, 246.

¹⁰⁹ Jackson, "Imagining Japan."

¹¹⁰ MacKenzie, *Orientalism*, 44.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 124.

Clifford's work,¹¹² Guth explains that "if what is authentic is first recognized by its function within a given sociocultural context, paradoxically, its 'authenticity' is confirmed only by the fact of its removal."¹¹³ Among other studies, Hannah Sigur's book, *The Influence of Japanese Art on Design* (2008), investigates the impact of Japanese aesthetics on Western designers – mainly North American. Through her analysis of different fields of applied arts, Sigur is able to conclude that "America's creative minds found Japanese art and crafts vital in crafting a distinctive image for their newly risen culture."¹¹⁴ Both Guth and Sigur's assumptions have been confirmed in the British context by Elizabeth Kramer. In various articles she discusses the agency of Japanese objects on late Victorian industrial designers (2006, 2007),¹¹⁵ and how the commercial success among contemporaneous British people who embraced these new visual inputs gave the birth to a Japan mania which should not be considered a superficial engagement or an indiscriminate consumption, but it mirrored a "variety of possible motivation: including membership to the colonial/imperial project, as status makers, or for artistic inspiration,"¹¹⁶ as well as the middle-class homemakers' participation to transform their house into an artistic experience.¹¹⁷ With regard to the Victorian and Edwardian appreciation for the Japanese *kimono*, Kramer addresses how the "westernization" of the Japanese traditional dress involved a manifold phenomenon characterised by "Victorian yearnings to preserve 'Old Japan' but also the desire to recapture a time before Britain's own industrialisation."¹¹⁸

On the other hand, the argument that the cultural encounter between Japan and the West fundamentally reinforced the dominant position of the latter has been discussed by various

¹¹² According to Clifford, the idea of authenticity in relation to collecting practices has "as much to do with an inventive present as with a past, its objectification, preservation or revival" James Clifford, "On Collecting Art and Culture," *Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 222.

¹¹³ Christine Guth, *Longfellow's Tattoos, Tourism, Collecting and Japan* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2004), xxi.

¹¹⁴ Hannah Sigur, *The Influence of Japanese Art on Design* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs Smith, 2008), 207.

¹¹⁵ Elizabeth Kramer, "Master or Market? The Anglo-Japanese Textile Designs of Christopher Dresser in Context," *The Journal of Design History* 19, no. 3 (2006): 197-214; Elizabeth Kramer, "From Luxury to Mania: A Case Study of Anglo-Japanese Textile Production at Warner & Ramm, 1870-1890," *Textile History* 38, no. 2 (2007): 151-164.

¹¹⁶ Kramer, Elizabeth. "Re-evaluating the Japan Mania in Victorian Britain: The Agency of Japanese and Anglo-Japanese Wares," *Networks of Design: Proceedings of the 2008 Annual International Conference of the Design History Society*, edited by Johnathan Glynne, Fiona Hackney and Viv Minton (Boca Raton, Florida: Universal Publisher, 2009), 173.

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth Kramer, "From Specimen to Scrap: Japanese Kimono and Textiles in the British Victorian Interior, 1875-1900," *Material Cultures in Britain, 1740-1920*, edited by John Potvin and Alla Myzelev (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 129-148.

¹¹⁸ Elizabeth Kramer, "'Not so Japan-Easy': The British Reception of Japanese Dress in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Textile History* 44, no. 1 (2013): 20.

scholars from the early 2000s. Considering that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the ideology of Orientalism gendered the “East” as feminine, subordinating it to the masculine “West,” Yoshihara Mari has suggested that the feminine connotation associated with Japanese culture was perpetuated by white women who embodied Asian femininity in order to bring “new meanings to their identities as American women,” but in so doing, they legitimised the masculine Orientalism.¹¹⁹ Similar to Longfellow, white women intentionally embraced the otherness associated with an “exotic” – for example, through the practice of cross-dressing – in order to escape the rigid social rules to which they were subjected on daily basis. However, to pursue this goal, they unintentionally erased the Asian body, justifying the dominant position of the Western society over Asian cultures.¹²⁰ Josephine Lee has taken an even more critical position on this topic, affirming that the appropriation of Japanese cultural forms in popular spectacles such as *The Mikado* “exhibited a marked casualness about their representational power, emphasizing yellowface as a kind of transparent disguise in which racial impersonation is performed simply by picking up the right objects.”¹²¹ As proposed by Christopher Bush, this objectification of Japanese culture led late Victorian commentators to draw their negative understanding of the Japanese from the metaphorical superficiality of Japanese objects in order to reinforce Western superiority.¹²²

In order to conjugate these two valid schools of thought regarding Japanese interactions with European countries and the United States, it is clear that the Saidian paradigm concerning the strict dualism between West/East and Self/Other needs to be put in relation with a plurality of perspectives, bringing into being what has been defined as a post-Saidian approach.¹²³ Rather than moving away from Said’s concept due to its lack of flexibility, scholars such as Hsu-Ming Teo has preferred to question the overly simplistic assumption of homogeneous “West” or

¹¹⁹ Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 193-195.

¹²¹ Josephine Lee, *The Japan of Pure Invention: Gilbert and Sullivan’s the Mikado* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 26.

¹²² Christopher Bush, “The Ethnicity of Things in America’s Lacquered Age,” *Representations* 99, no. 1 (2007): 78-98.

¹²³ *After Orientalism: Critical Perspectives on Western Agency and Eastern Re-appropriations*, edited by François Pouillion and Jean-Claude Vatin (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

“East”, demonstrating that also counter- and self-Orientalising phenomena often played a vital part in creating multiple “selves” in both Western and non-Western countries.¹²⁴

In order to identify and investigate the multifaceted connotation of the cultural encounter between Japan and “Western” countries during the Meiji period, scholars of Japanese visual culture have employed a transcultural approach. As suggested by Julie Codell, transculturality advocates that even in the context of unequal power relations, “opportunities of exchange and interaction [...] may create a space, a work of art or an encounter that momentarily suspends those imbalances.”¹²⁵ For instance, Luke Gartlan reveals how Japanese photographers adopted what appeared to be an imperialist view of Japan while at the same time modifying “such themes in subtle ways to challenge the visual primacy of their foreign counterparts.”¹²⁶ In a similar manner, Wakita Mio identifies in the souvenir photographs of geisha models produced by the Yokohama-based Japanese photographer Kusakabe Kimbei (1841-1934) a conflicted juncture of the longing among foreigners for exotic femininity, Kimbei’s commodification of a Japanese icon of desire, and the models’ performances as geisha. As Wakita concludes, the “mirage” of authenticity incorporated in such photographs ultimately functioned “as a veiling mechanism to hide [these] intricate semantic transformations.”¹²⁷ These two studies show the potential of employing transcultural concepts to investigate cultural interactions by means of Japanese visual and material culture, and therethrough successfully preserve the ambiguity of the exchanges that occurred in Meiji Japan.

Building upon this branch of research, the present thesis transposes the methodology used by Gartlan and Wakita to a different context. Rather than the city of Yokohama, which was the main Japanese gateway to the “West” and vice versa, the focus of this research is a British region, specifically the North East of England, which also developed a direct link with Japan in the late Victorian period. This decision aims to firstly reveal that transcultural phenomena such

¹²⁴ Hsu-Ming Teo, “Critical Race and Whiteness Studies,” *Critical Race and Whiteness Studies* 10, no. 1 (2014): 1–17. See also Daisuke Nishihara, “Said, Orientalism, and Japan,” *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 25 (2002): 241-253.

¹²⁵ Julie Codell, “The Art of Transculturation,” *Transculturation in British Art, 1770-1930*, edited by Julie Codell (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 2.

¹²⁶ Luke Gartlan, “‘Bronzed and Muscular Bodies’: Jinrikishas, Tattooed Bodies and Yokohama Tourist Photography,” *Transculturation in British Art, 1770-1930*, edited by Julie Codell (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 107.

¹²⁷ Mio Wakita, “In the Guise of Photographic Veracity: Photographic Souvenir Images of Meiji Femininity in the Age of Visual Modernity,” *Shifting Paradigms in East Asian Visual Culture*, edited by Burglind Jungmann, Adele Schlombs, Melanie Trede (Berlin: Reimer, 2012), 346. See also, Mio Wakita, *Staging Desires: Japanese Femininity in Kusakabe Kimbei’s Nineteenth-Century Souvenir Photography* (Berlin: Reimer, 2013).

as those described by Gartlan and Wakita occurred even within English borders and were not a prerogative of extraterritorial environments at the margin such as Japanese treaty ports. Secondly, the transcultural approach employed in this thesis facilitates the analysis of the gaps left by the Japonisme scholarship focused on the Anglo-Japanese cultural relationship such as the lack of comprehensive research concerning peripheral regions, as well as the analysis of different everyday practices as results of ongoing cultural negotiations.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Prior to investigating the transcultural encounters between Japan and the North East, it is necessary to provide a definition of what is “culture.” As suggested by Jan Nederveen Pieterse, the concept of culture should be considered the conflation of two notions: the *territorial* culture, which “stems from a learning process that is, in the main, localized”;¹²⁸ and the *translocal* culture, in which the learning process is general to all humans.¹²⁹ The former is associated with the concept that a certain society or social group of people in a specific place might develop a distinctive cultural identity which underlies the divergence between “Self” and “Other.” Besides, the idea of the *translocal* culture implies that a certain cultural phenomenon might be found in, and common to, different social groups, and even to all humanity. This does not mean that it is without place, on the contrary, a *translocal* cultural phenomenon involves the concept, theorised by Doreen Massey, of “global sense of place”, in which “what gives a place its specificity is not some long internalised history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus.”¹³⁰ Lastly, to Nederveen Pieterse, *territorial* and *translocal* concepts of culture are not incompatible as they “reflect different emphases in relation to historical processes of culture formation” on the everyday production of meaning.¹³¹

Taking into consideration these two notions, this thesis argues that the cultural encounters between the North East and Japan were not just the response to international trade and diplomatic relations but were mostly characterised by a *translocal* exchange. The Japanese narrative in the region corresponded with many of the diverse global discourses associated with

¹²⁸ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, “Globalization as Hybridization,” *Global Modernities*, by Mike Featherstone et al. (London: Sage, 1995), 61.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

¹³⁰ For Massey, this concept also “allows a sense of place which is extroverted, which includes a consciousness of its links with the wider world, which integrates in a positive way the global and the local.” Doreen Massey, “A Global Sense of Place,” *Marxist Today* 15, no. 6 (1991): 28.

¹³¹ Nederveen Pieterse, “Globalization as Hybridization,” 61.

Japan which functioned as vehicles of multiple meanings, including escapist longing, cosmopolitanism, and refined taste. As a result, the spaces in which these encounters occurred reflected the “global sense of place” introduced by Massey, in which the “constellation of social relations” was built upon the dialogue between the direct experience of Japanese people in the North East and the representation of Japanese culture through Japanese visual and material culture in public lectures about Japan, Japan-themed events, and domestic interiors.

In order to investigate how the *translocal* connotation of this cultural phenomenon occurred and developed during the period under examination, this study turns to the concept of transculturation, which privileges a methodological approach based on the dialectical dynamics between two (or more) cultures. Coined in 1940 by the anthropologist Fernando Ortiz, the term transculturation identifies the process that occurs when two cultures encounter, giving rise to a new cultural phenomenon that involves loss and recovery in new forms of cultural expression.

As Ortiz defines:

The term transculturation better expresses the different phases in the transitive process from one culture to another, because this process does not only imply the acquisition of culture, [...] but it also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of one’s preceding culture.¹³²

As suggested by Felipe Hernández, Ortiz aimed to investigate the “new form of cultural dynamics that understands cultural productivity not in binary terms but as a fluid complex operation among differing and contesting cultural sites.”¹³³ Thus, the term transculturation ultimately implies that culture was “a dynamic, creative social fact,” rather than the “resulting syncretisms.”¹³⁴

Since its origin, the transcultural paradigm developed by Ortiz has been adopted by different fields of research and disciplines in the past eight decades. This results in the formation of multiple interpretations, which according to Daniel König and Katja Rakow can be divided into

¹³² Fernando Ortiz, *Cuban Counterpoint, Tobacco and Sugar*, originally *Contrapunteo Cubano del Tabaco y el azúcar*, Havana, 1940 (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2003), 32-33.

¹³³ Felipe Hernández, “Introduction: Transcultural Architecture in Latin America,” *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America*, edited by Felipe Hernández, Mark Millington and Iain Borden (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 2005), xi.

¹³⁴ Catherine Davies, “Fernando Ortiz’s Transculturation: The Postcolonial Intellectual and the Politics of Cultural Representation,” *Postcolonial Perspectives on Latin American and Lusophone Cultures*, edited by Robin Fiddian (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), 149. The philosopher Wolfgang Welsch further extends Ortiz’s idea, arguing that modern society is transcultural and heterogeneous because of “the inner differentiation and complexity of modern cultures” in which the subject is a nomad and a multitude. Wolfgang Welsch, “Transculturality: The Puzzling Form of Cultures Today,” *Spaces of Culture: City, Nation, World*, edited by Mike Featherstone and Scott Lash (London: Sage, 1999), 197, 201.

four main groups.¹³⁵ In the first, the term “transcultural” is associated with phenomena that are considered universal or common to most of humanity (such as the negative connotation of crime) and then impossible to be confined to specific groups of cultures. Although it fails to address the aspect of transition, so important for Ortiz, this definition is often used in fields such as psychology, nursing, counselling, and corporate management, in which it is necessary to overcome communicative obstacles, providing a service to people with different cultural backgrounds.¹³⁶ Secondly, the term “transcultural” is linked to studies that investigate phenomena originating in a specific area which later spread to different and wider cultural milieus, such as in the case of religions.¹³⁷ In the third group, the prefix “trans-” does not underline phenomena that occur in different cultures but focuses on the mediating role which such phenomena play as “cultural brokers.”¹³⁸ Lastly, a fourth and more recent definition employs “transculturality” as a methodological tool to deconstruct concepts such as “society,” “class,” or “gender,” questioning their supposed boundaries and preconceptions.¹³⁹

The type of transcultural approach employed in this thesis is in line with the fourth understanding identified by König and Rakow, as through a detailed analysis of the everyday encounters between Japanese culture and the people in the North East, dichotomies such as Self/Other, empire/colonies, metropolis/periphery, and masculine/feminine are challenged and reassessed, offering a more nuanced understanding of the relationship. As Monica Juneja theorises:

transcultural studies can refine the analysis of flows by looking more closely and critically at the dialectic between the dissolution of certain boundaries and the reaffirmation of other kinds of difference.¹⁴⁰

Focusing on the processes by which two entangled cultural phenomena – the British fascination with Japanese culture and the idea of Japan as a modern nation – emerged in the North East of

¹³⁵Daniel G. König, Daniel G., and Katja Rakow, “The Transcultural Approach Within a Disciplinary Framework: An Introduction,” *Transcultural Studies* 7, no. 2 (2016): 93-95.

¹³⁶ John Cox, ed., *Transcultural Psychiatry* (London: Croom Helm, 1986); Madeleine Leininger and Marylin McFarland, *Transcultural Nursing: Concepts, Theories, Research and Practice* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002); John McFadden, ed., *Transcultural Counseling: Bilateral and International Perspectives* (Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association, 1993).

¹³⁷ Gudrun Lachenmann, “Globalisation in the Making: Translocal Gendered Spaces in Muslim Societies,” *Translocality*, edited by Ulrike Freitag and Achim von Oppen (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

¹³⁸ Marc von der Höh et al., *Cultural Brokers at Mediterranean Courts in the Middle Ages* (Munich: Fink, 2013).

¹³⁹ Monica Juneja and Christian Kravagna, “Understanding Transculturalism—Monica Juneja and Christian Kravagna in Conversation,” *Transcultural Modernisms*, edited by Model House Research Group (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013).

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

England, a region holding a direct connection with Japan, this research analyses the multiple ways in which cultural differences were negotiated within everyday contacts and encounters, and how they challenged certain preconceptions while reinforcing other stereotypes associated with Japan.

Transculturality as a research approach possesses multiple advantages. The most significant strength is that it preserves the inner complexity of encounters between different cultures as part of the everyday. Fundamentally, it advocates that every cultural relationship is by nature an ongoing unresolved dialogue which is not characterised by a static power relation between two (or more) interlocutors. The asymmetrical connotation of the resulting interaction is constantly questioned and eventually subverted, revealing a plurality of outcomes. It follows that using the transcultural paradigm in this thesis sheds light on the manifold forms in which the cultural relationship between Japan and the North East developed during the period under examination.

The only limiting tendency of transcultural studies has been their privileging of analysis at the global or national scale, as a result of which there are but a few comprehensive investigations of smaller locales such as regions or towns. Most of such researches, indeed, have employed a macro-perspective to address issues such as globalisation,¹⁴¹ migration,¹⁴² or modern media,¹⁴³ and, while succeeding in identifying the formation and development of global trends and phenomena, they have sacrificed to a certain degree the analysis of how such cultural forms influenced, and adapted to, the plurality of social environments within a country or a region. As underlined by Monica Juneja, editor of *The Journal of Transcultural Studies*:

the challenge now is to find a language to theorize the complex morphology of flows, to supplement macro-perspectives by descending into the thicket of localities – urban and rural, past and present, central and at the margins – in which the dynamics of actual encounters involving a host of actors become more clearly evident and meaningful.¹⁴⁴

This thesis attempts to offer some recompense for this lack of localised perspectives on the global phenomenon of the fascination with Japan, by focusing on the everyday practices

¹⁴¹ Michele Back, ed. *Transcultural Performance: Negotiating Globalized Indigenous Identities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

¹⁴² Anne Ring Petersen, *Migration into Art: Transcultural Identities and Art-making in a Globalised World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017).

¹⁴³ Andreas Hepp, *Transcultural Communication* (Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015).

¹⁴⁴ Juneja and Kravagna, “Understanding Transculturalism,” 26.

concerned with Japanese visual and material culture in a specific region, the North East of England.

As the research questions involve the investigation of the transcultural connotation of the Anglo-Japanese relationship and its interaction with the cultural identity of the North East, the macro-perspective common to other transcultural studies concerning the British fascination with Japan is here supplemented by a new paradigm which emphasises the diverse cast of actors with regard to the diffusion, reception, appreciation, and promotion of Japanese visual and material culture. In addition to focusing on the changing behaviours of specific networks of individuals across the period under examination, the limited geographical scope of this thesis allows a more comprehensive analysis of the wide-ranging interactions that occurred on daily basis in the private and public realms. This approach aims to identify dynamics through which the constructed image of Japan was bridged to the North East as well as the meaningful actors and processes that made possible these interactions. To pursue this goal, this thesis traces the plethora of different meanings that regional newspaper editors, intellectuals, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, retailers, collectors, and consumers associated with Japanese and Anglo-Japanese visual and material culture as part of the everyday, highlighting the simultaneous impact that Japan had on different parts of daily life in the North East, including those related to international trade and military alliances, as well as the fascination with exotica and consumption of decorative objects. Building upon this dual characteristic, regional newspapers have represented the most valuable resource to identify the three elements that characterised the Anglo-Japanese encounter in the North East: the transcultural flows which carried the discursive narratives concerning Japan in the region, the Japanese visual and material culture that supported and rejected these narratives, and the social spaces in which these dynamics occurred.

With regard to the narratives concerning Japan that were developing in the North East, a prominent role was played by transcultural flows, which conveyed the main ideas about Japan to this British region. Even during direct contact with Japanese people and artefacts, the experience of Japanese culture in the North East was coloured by preconceptions formed through other sources of information, such as newspapers, travel or domestic advice literature, and public events. These everyday encounters with Japan, whether manifestations of Japanese stereotypes or genuine cultural exchanges, reached the North East by way of transcultural flows, which carried knowledge in diverse media, including news reports of commercial agreements,

discussions of decorative trends, and musical comedies. As defined by Alastair Pennycook, transcultural flows are:

the ways in which cultural forms move, change and are reused to fashion new identities in diverse contexts. This is not, therefore, a question merely of cultural movement but of take-up, appropriation, change and refashioning.¹⁴⁵

In other words, they can be also associated with what Stuart Hall recognises as a result of mundane practices formed by linguistic and non-linguistic signs. Named “discursive formations,” Hall defines them as cultural phenomena which establish:

what is and is not appropriate in our formulation of, and our practices in relation to, a particular subject or site of social activity; what knowledge is considered useful, relevant and ‘true’ in that context; and what sort of persons and ‘subjects’ embody its characteristics.¹⁴⁶

Building upon Hall’s concept, Andreas Hepp suggests that discursive formations are fundamentally “ongoing, patterned constellations ultimately involved in the production of meaning in the course of everyday life.”¹⁴⁷ By linking the global image of Japan to the everyday consciousness of that country in the North East of England, the transcultural flows considered in this thesis are investigated as discursive formations which transported the plurality of “true” meanings that European and American people associated with Japanese culture.

Considering that during the second half of the nineteenth century the popular idea of Japan was dominated by the dualism between “Old” and “New” Japan, these two conceptualisations of Japanese culture also worked as transcultural flows. More specifically, these two macro-discourses acted as intermediaries between the global representation of Japan and its reception in the North East. As observed throughout this thesis, each flow involved multiple meanings, which not only shared a common vocabulary with the rest of Britain and other English-speaking countries, but also evinced the multiplicity of sometimes contradictory connotations attached to Japan.

With regard to the ways in which these transcultural flows reached the North East of England, a predominant role was played by those figures that Stephen Greenblatt has defined “mobilizers,” such as “agents, go-betweens, translators, or intermediaries [which] often emerge to facilitate

¹⁴⁵ Alastair Pennycook, *Global Englishes and Transcultural Flows* (London: Routledge, 2007), 7.

¹⁴⁶ Stuart Hall, Introduction to *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publishing, 1997), 6.

¹⁴⁷ Hepp, *Transcultural Communication*, 13.

contact” between cultures through the exchange of “cultural goods.”¹⁴⁸ Concerning the transcultural relationship between Japan and the North East, the generic list provided by Greenblatt must be extended to include other professionals such as editors, lecturers, decorators, and retailers who incorporated the local aspect in their discourses about Japan, its culture, and its people. As discussed in the following chapters, all these “mobilizers” presented the manifold and ambivalent narrative concerning Japanese culture in the North East, allowing the regional interest in, and fascination with, Japan to be part of a global cultural phenomenon during the period under examination.

To underline the mundane and ambiguous connotation concerning the Anglo-Japanese interaction, this thesis draws upon extensive research performed over late Victorian newspapers published in the North East. This kind of publication provided its readership with more accessible formulations of the ethical, aesthetic, and political views of Japan; but these views were constantly revised in response to new circumstances. As a result, impressions of Japan were subjected to an ongoing reassessment, which fluctuated in accordance with the unresolved nature of the newspaper. As theorised by Margaret Beetham, the periodical as a Victorian literary genre comprises both “open” and “closed” forms.¹⁴⁹ Beetham defines:

‘Closed’ or ‘masculine’ forms are seen as those which assert the dominant structures of meaning by closing off alternative options and offering the reader or viewer only one way of making sense of the text and so, by analogy, of the world and the self. By contrast the ‘open’ form, the form which refuses the closed ending and allows for the possibility of alternative meanings, is associated with the potentially disruptive, the creative, the ‘feminine.’¹⁵⁰

As better explained in the next chapter, the way in which newspapers discussed Japan was characterised by both “open” and “closed” forms, as exemplified by the coexistence in the same issue of articles referring to Japanese culture in seemingly opposing ideas.

Thanks to the British Library’s Newspaper Archive, it was possible to read a total of 22 newspapers published from 1850 and 1913.¹⁵¹ Being digitalised, these newspapers have been

¹⁴⁸ Stephen Greenblatt, “A Mobility Studies Manifesto,” *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto*, edited by Stephen Greenblatt, Ines Županov, Reinhard Meyer-Kalkus, Heike Paul, Pál Nyíri and Frederike Pannewick (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 251.

¹⁴⁹ Margaret Beetham, “Open and Closed: The Periodical as a Publishing Genre,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 22, no. 3 (1989): 96-100.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹⁵¹ The newspapers that are covered include *Alnwick Mercury*; *The Berwick Advertiser*; *Berwickshire News and General Advertiser*; *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough*; *Darlington & Stockton Times, Ripon & Richmond*

initially investigated using methodologies developed within the Digital Humanities, an interdisciplinary field of studies which focuses on the use of computational tools to analyse, for instance, large-scale databases of written materials, such as newspapers.¹⁵² Using keyword searches including “Japan” or “Japanese” in combination with terms such as “exhibition,” “lecture,” or “ceramic” across multiple digitalised newspapers, it was possible to unearth a great quantity of articles and advertisements which mentioned Japan, its culture, or its people. In a second phase, this collection of raw data was individually scrutinised in order to identify the specific content of each article or advertisement. After that, charts and graphs had been created to unfold the complexity regarding the development and reception of the aforementioned transcultural flows in the North East of England.

In addition, the information unearthed from newspapers was complemented by an extensive research in most of the regional archives in order to find historical documents as well as visual and material culture. For instance, the Tyne and Wear Archives in Newcastle, Teesside Archives in Middlesbrough, and the Local History Archive at the Beamish Museum have revealed the presence of further material related to Japan-themed public events such as lecture syllabuses, bazaar guides, photographs, and flyers, as well as auction sale catalogues of households and photographs of domestic interiors dating between 1890s and 1910s, in which Japanese decorative objects are listed, detailed, or pictured. In the resulting mosaic formed by historical documents, newspaper articles, visual and material culture, every tessera provides a valuable detail to understand the ambiguous essence of the transcultural relationship between Japan and the North East of England.

This ambiguity became even more apparent taking into consideration the ways in which Japanese visual and material culture was experienced in the North East. As discussed by Jules David Prown, material culture can be defined as “the study through artifacts of the beliefs – values, ideas, attitudes, and assumptions – of a particular community or society at a given

Chronicle; Durham Chronicle; Durham County Advertiser; Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail; Hexham Courant; Jarrow Express; Morpeth Herald; Newcastle Courant; Newcastle Weekly Chronicle; Newcastle Daily Chronicle; Newcastle Evening Chronicle; Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury; Newcastle Journal; Northern Echo; Shields Daily Gazette; Shields Daily News; Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette; Teesdale Mercury. For a historical overview of the newspapers published in the North East, see, Peter Isaac, ed., *Newspapers in the Northeast: The ‘Fourth Estate’ at Work in Northumberland & Durham* (Wylam: Allenholme, 1999).

¹⁵² Matthew Kirschenbaum, “What Is Digital Humanities and What’s It Doing in English Departments?” *ADE Bulletin*, no. 150 (2010): 1–7.

time.”¹⁵³ Following Prown’s paradigm, Japanese and Anglo-Japanese art and decorative objects such as ceramics, textiles, fans, screens, lanterns, paintings, prints, umbrellas, lacquerware, photographs and films are discussed alongside Japanese weapons, sets or armour, and naturalistic specimens in order to interrogate the ways in which Japan, in its manifold representations, was perceived, appreciated, and consumed in the North East. Altogether, the study of the visual and material aspects of this transcultural relationship throws light on the multi-sensory character of Anglo-Japanese interactions, as well as the multitude of meanings associated therewith, such as exoticism and cosmopolitanism, tradition and modernity.

Museums and historical country houses in the North East hold extensive and diverse collections of such Japanese and Anglo-Japanese objects, which, when viewed as a whole, provide a comprehensive picture of the transcultural relationship between Japan and the North East, including its economic transactions, as well as practices of consumption and collection. The commercial link is testified by the models of the ships purchased by the Japanese from the shipyards on the Tyne which are kept at the Discovery Museum in Newcastle; while the Tyne and Wear Archives contains photographs and documents with regard to Japanese officials visiting the region. The late Victorian enthusiasm for Japanese decorative objects such as ceramics, textiles, fans, screens, prints, and lacquerware, is well represented in the museum collections at the Laing Art Gallery in Newcastle, the Bowes Museum in Barnard Castle, and the Berwick Museum. Lastly, late-nineteenth-century interior arrangements involving Japanese articles are partly preserved inside historical country houses and castles throughout the region such as Craggside, Wallington, and Bamburgh and Alnwick Castles, which were owned by industrialists and aristocrats. The examination of these museum and public collections unearths much knowledge of how the dualistic and occasionally contradictory meanings ascribed to Japan represented an opportunity for many consumers and collectors in the region to question the rigid Victorian code in respect of gendered and imperialist discourses.

Using digitalised regional periodicals as primary sources in combination with archive and museum materials has its advantages. Considering that newspapers were published in most towns in the North East, the digitalised sources used in this study are far more than what could

¹⁵³ Jules David Prown, “Mind in Matter: An Introduction to Material Culture Theory and Method,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 17, no. 1 (1982): 1.

have been analysed using non-digital methodologies. Accordingly, the creative use of keyword searches has allowed to shed light on facts that have been almost completely neglected by historian of the North East, such as the organisation of public events themed as Japanese in major towns as well as rural villages. This was possible because newspapers in the British Library's Newspaper Archive have been selected in consultation with a panel of librarians and academic historians who attempted to ensure that "the titles selected were geographically and politically as representative as possible and also could lay claim to a wide circulation [and]... political influence."¹⁵⁴ As a result, also with regards to the North East of England, the digital archive contains a broad range of metropolitan, provincial, daily, weekly, liberal, radical, and conservative publications.

Regarding the everyday encounter with Japan experienced in the North East, primary source material in local archives and museums only provides a limited perspective, which has been integrated with information gathered from digitalised and non-digitalised periodicals. For instance, most of the historical documents in local archives discussed in this thesis only offer a detailed view regarding specific Anglo-Japanese interactions in the North East such as the industrial friendship. In a similar manner, the Japanese material on display in local museums, or kept in museum deposits, only represents a small part of the Japanese objects which once decorated middle-class country houses or could be purchased in almost every town of the region by local retailers.¹⁵⁵ In both cases, the analysis of articles and advertisements published in local newspapers has allowed to connect the dots between such transnational relations and the everyday experience of Japan in the region.

Lastly, using periodicals has also facilitated the analysis of historical documents and material culture in both archives and museums, enhancing the originality and value of this regional study. The impressive amount of information gathered from digitalised newspapers allowed to visit conventional archives and museums in the region with a clear idea of what to expect to find even before consulting the archive catalogue. Having said that, using digitalised and non-digitalised periodicals as primary sources of enquiry and initial guidance for archive research

¹⁵⁴ Martin Conboy, "The 19th Century British Library Newspapers Website", *Reviews in History* (2008), <https://reviews.history.ac.uk/review/730> (accessed 15/01/2020).

¹⁵⁵ As further discussed in the following chapters, the same can be said with regard to the visual and material culture produced for lectures about Japan or other public events such as exhibitions, theatrical performances, or charity bazaar decorated to resemble a pre-modern Japanese village.

has clearly provided a fundamental help to re-discover Japanese and Anglo-Japanese visual and material culture.

However, the digital part of this methodology has some technical limitations to take into consideration. First and foremost, many of the papers in the British Library's Newspaper Archive have issues missing during the period under examination, and the accuracy of OCR scanning is not yet perfect.¹⁵⁶ Among the newspapers investigated, most of them has more than 70% of issues digitalised,¹⁵⁷ which is an impressive percentage *per se*, but not enough to remove any doubts regarding the exact amount of articles about Japan in periodicals published in the North East. In addition, the occasional defective accuracy of OCR scanning further prevent to evaluate the data collected as incontrovertible proof.

Taking into consideration the research questions, the aforementioned limitations do not play a relevant role in this thesis. With regard to the occasional missing of issues, the fact that at least two newspapers were simultaneously published in most major towns allows to evaluate those gaps as minor flaws that do not affect the understanding of the overall pictures, considering that every big news about Japan - as well as local events themed as Japanese or advertisements of Japanese objects - were mostly published multiple times in different regional newspapers. Furthermore, while the non-digitalised periodicals risk to become what Patrick Leary has defined "offline penumbra,"¹⁵⁸ it is also true that such issues have been consulted by visiting conventional archives in which nineteenth-century newspapers are kept in their original form as well as in microfilm format. Therefore, the only real impact regarding the occasional missing of issues was to slow down the investigation of such source. However, as demonstrated in each chapter, the lack of some newspapers did not precluded to draw any conclusions as the prominent aim of this study is not to provide impeccable statistical data, but to evaluate the transcultural impact of Japanese culture on the everyday in the North East of England during the period under examination.

¹⁵⁶ OCR, which stands for Optical Character Recognition, is a technology that recognizes text within a digital image.

¹⁵⁷ See Appendix A.

¹⁵⁸ Patrick Leary defines "offline penumbra" as an "increasingly remote and unvisited shadowland into which even quite important texts fall if they cannot yet be explored [...] by any electronic means." Patrick Leary, "Google the Victorians," *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 10:1, (2005): 72

As a result of this methodology, this thesis identifies the sites of contact at which the transcultural interaction occurred – for example, Japan-themed public events and home interiors – and analyses how these social spaces were produced. Following Henri Lefebvre, space should not be considered a thing,¹⁵⁹ or a container,¹⁶⁰ but rather a social construction based on values and production of meanings which affects spatial practices and perceptions.¹⁶¹ As Lefebvre concludes, “social relations, which are concrete abstractions, have no real existence save in and through space. *Their underpinning is spatial* [emphasis in the original].”¹⁶² Accordingly, it is only through analysis of the sites of contact at which Anglo-Japanese interactions occurred that Japanese visual and material culture ultimately reveal their social meanings and the extent to which they influenced the North East’s identity.

When the social relations discussed by Lefebvre involve different cultures, the resulting space might be linked to the concept of the “contact zone.” Coined by Mary Louise Pratt, a “contact zone” is the place in which cultures “meet, clash and grapples with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.”¹⁶³ For Pratt, this physical or imaginary space is where transculturation comes into being, which might happen at a border town or a classroom, or at an immaterial place evoked through travel writings or other types of literature.¹⁶⁴ Ultimately, the concept of the contact zone has helped scholars to define the kinds of space which facilitate encounters, exchanges, and debates, albeit their forms are distorted by an imbalance of power between the interlocutors.

Taking into consideration the idea of Japan in the late Victorian period, the asymmetrical relationship between British and Japanese culture is compatible with the concept of contact zone defined by Pratt. However, at the turn of the century, the subordinated status of Japan on the world stage began to change following the Japanese victories against China in 1895 and Russia in 1905, as well as the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902. Nevertheless, during the period under examination, the imperialist preconception concerning the British

¹⁵⁹ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 73.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 404.

¹⁶³ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 4.

¹⁶⁴ Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession* 15 (1991): 33-40.

economic and military superiority over Japan was never completely subverted. Consequently, the necessary amendments to Pratt's definition should be limited to acknowledging that the Anglo-Japanese relationship is a dynamic one, rather than a static and immutable power relation between coloniser and colonised.

To better illustrate the intricacies of the transcultural interaction between Japan and the North East of England, this research investigates multiple contact zones at which Japanese visual and material culture was encountered or at least evoked. The resulting imaginary and physical spaces that are taken into account comprise newspapers, public lectures, exhibitions, acrobatic spectacles, theatrical plays, charity bazaars and fairs, shops, and domestic interiors. By way of the visual and material culture encountered in these contact zones, people in the North East had everyday access to both factual and fantastic depictions of Japan, its culture, and its people. For this reason, the analysis of these social spaces not only provides a comprehensive picture of the daily experience of Japan in the North East, but also throws light on the ways in which Japanese and Anglo-Japanese visual and material culture created meanings within a diversity of situations, both in public and private spheres.

Chapter Outlines

The spatial concept of contact zone has served also to structure this thesis. Each of the following five chapters investigates a different type of contact zone focusing on the ways in which the Japanese and Anglo-Japanese visual and material culture was discussed, appreciated, promoted, collected and consumed within each social space.

The first chapter focuses on the diverse images of Japan promoted in regional newspapers, underlining the shifting meanings associated with the Asian country throughout the period under examination. In addition to estimating that information about Japan and its people could be read on a weekly basis in the North East, this chapter identifies the main discourses concerning Japanese culture that appeared in such popular publications. Being the "space" in which most people "encountered" Japan in the early 1850s, newspapers published in the region are considered here a contact zone. In the following years, the initial genuine curiosity quickly developed into an imperialistic euphoria of exporting free trade into Japan as well as an exotic fascination. In the 1870s, when the Meiji government began to embrace a process of modernisation, the narratives of "Old" and "New" Japan arose, and, in order to avoid conflicts while simultaneously taking advantage of both, these two understandings of Japanese culture began to be discussed in separate newspaper sections. This clear separation persisted until the

outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), which forced Britain to reassess the image of Japan, taking into consideration the aggressive attitude manifested by the Japanese. Whereas it did not defuse the exotic fascination with Japan, the rise of an Asian country as a military power, confirmed by the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902) and the Japanese victory against Russia (1905), allowed the coexistence of multiple interpretations of Japanese modernisation, including being a symbol of emancipation by members of subordinated or marginal groups in Western societies.

A similar tendency can be noticed in public events related to Japan organised in the North East, which are investigated in the second chapter. The frequency and ways in which people encountered Japan through Japanese visual and material culture is discussed taking into consideration the initial curiosity in Japanese culture from the late 1850s and the necessary reassessment of the popular image of Japan due to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War (1894). For example, the unexpected display of aggressivity by the Japanese during the conflict against China confounded the people in the North East to the point that numerous British experts were called to deliver illustrated lectures about Japan in various cultural and religious institutions throughout the region. Likewise, the way Japanese objects were exhibited in public spaces changed in response to the new position of Japan on the world stage. Prior to that, Japanese artistic and decorative objects were exhibited mainly as exotic curiosities, but from the early 1900s, Japanese art in regional museums began to be historically contextualised. In contrast, the popularity of Japan-themed acrobatic spectacles and other entertainments such as musical comedies was not influenced by the new understanding of Japan, demonstrating not only that by the turn of the century the exotic “Old” Japan was still highly considered in the North East of England, but also that a static and pre-modern representation of Japanese culture was instrumental to dilute those anxieties with regard to the emerging image of Japan as an economic and military power able to eventually subvert the British dominant position.

The analysis of charity bazaars and fairs in the third chapter further corroborates most of the assertions already highlighted, but only with the difference that in the early twentieth century, these public events did not maintain the popularity achieved in the 1880s. Promoting a unified and pre-modern representation of Japanese culture in both urban and rural areas in the North East, Japan-themed charity bazaars and fairs are analysed in order to identify the ways in which these contact zones became popular and how Japan was represented. Mostly arranged by the same few companies of decorators, these events followed the standardised decorative scheme

of a pre-modern “Japanese Village,” which attracted a wide audience in both large centres such as Newcastle or Darlington, but also in rural towns such as Stanhope, in County Durham. In addition to further naturalising Japanese visual and material culture as a morally acceptable commodity within philanthropic events, Japan-themed bazaars allowed people in the North East to cross-dress as Japanese in a public and “respectable” environment.

The fourth chapter analyses the retail and marketing of Japanese objects in the North East of England to understand the commodification of Japanese culture in that region. The focus is not only on identifying how frequently Japanese material culture was advertised in provincial periodicals, but also which narratives were followed. In contrast to Japonisme studies which have asserted that the decorative arts were brought to attention by the intelligentsia to the generic public in the 1880s; from the early 1860s, Japanese textiles, pottery and lacquer began to appear in newspaper adverts in Durham, Newcastle and Sunderland. By the second half of the 1870s, the news and the marketing of Japanese decorative objects reached every corner of the North East. In terms of promotion, rather than exploiting the well-established international trade that linked the region to Japan, most of the retailers emphasised the exotic remoteness of Japanese culture. As a result, the marketing and retail of Japanese objects presented and reinforced the idea of Japan as an idealised country even after the Sino-Japanese war, contributing to corroborating the ambiguous representation of Japan, its culture, and its people.

The final chapter examines how the Japanese objects discussed in the newspapers and encountered in the public sphere were experienced in the private sphere. In other words, the focus is on the ways in which the domestic environment acted as a contact zone taking into consideration the professional figures who mediated this transcultural phenomenon. Albeit still considered exotic articles, mediators such as local upholsterers and domestic advice literature quickly naturalised the presence of Japanese decorative objects in the British domesticity pointing not only to their aesthetic excellence but also to their inner morality. Drawing upon auction sales catalogue and photographs of late Victorian domestic interiors, this chapter demonstrates that houseowners in the North East relied on Japanese decorative objects to elevate their domestic environment to an aesthetic and cosmopolitan experience in line with the cultural, social and consuming phenomenon of *Household Art*, which was popular in both Britain and North America during the late Victorian period. In addition, through the display and consumption of Japanese fans, ceramics, screens, textiles, and other visual and material culture, the separation between “Old” and “New” Japan was partially overcome in regard to their

respective feminine and masculine connotation, in order to reflect the individual interpretation of each collector, household, and social class.

In conclusion, the analysis of each contact zone through transcultural flows and Japanese visual and material culture reveals that the popular understanding of the Asian country in the North East of England between 1862 and 1913 was characterised by an ambiguous dualism between the exotic, unchanging “Old” Japan and the modern, industrialised “New” Japan. Anticipated during the early 1850s in newspapers articles and public lectures, this strict dichotomy later developed into a more nuanced and unresolved negotiation which simultaneously reinforced and questioned the racial discourse concerning Japanese culture in Britain, contributing to putting under scrutiny – and occasionally deconstructing – dualisms such as Self/Other and masculine/feminine, especially in the private sphere. As this thesis argues, this ongoing ambiguity was due to the fact that especially from the 1870s, the Japanese voice within the unbalanced power relation with Britain was never completely silenced, giving rise to transcultural phenomena which counterbalanced any static representation of Japan.

While the encounter between Japan and the North East – exemplified by the local warships and guns sold to the Japanese Navy or the tons of pig-iron shipped from Middlesbrough to Japan – was instrumental to further validate the image of “New” Japan, it was rather a conflict of global resonance such as the Sino-Japanese War that stimulated in the North East a less patronising attitude towards Japanese culture. In a similar manner, instead of local trade with Japan – which literally brought Japanese objects and people to the region – it was the national and international connotation of the Japan mania that contributed to shaping the fascination with, and consumption of, Japan in the North East, mediated through musical comedies, companies of decorators, and domestic advice literature. This confirms that the cultural dialogue between Japan and the British region was not exclusively attached to the local development. Therefore, in terms of the transformation of knowledge concerning both “Old” and “New” Japan, this regional study demonstrates that in late Victorian and Edwardian periods also the North East was part of *translocal* discourses involving a global sense of place in both public and private environments.

Chapter I: Japan in North Eastern Newspapers

Introduction

In the field of Victorian studies, literary scholars often perform what is called a “close reading” of literary texts in order to investigate representations, deconstruct discourses and develop alternative interpretations of Victorian culture. Focusing on individual words, the syntax, and the formal structure of selected Victorian texts, “close reading” is a successful method to identify specific cultural phenomena within social groups characterised by common features, such as class, education, and background. However, when it is extended to larger, heterogeneous groups, “close reading” manifests an important limitation. Taking into consideration the vast number of books, periodicals, and other printed ephemera published during the Victorian period,¹⁶⁵ it is clear that individual scholars can reasonably attempt to “closely” read but a small fraction of this corpus of literature, thus limiting the potential to draw conclusions valid for different social contexts.

To overcome this problem, in the early 2000s the literary scholar Franco Moretti theorised the concept of “distant reading.” While “close reading [...] necessarily depends on an extremely small canon”; “distant reading” aims to investigate larger collection of texts employing computational and statistical methods which allow “to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text.”¹⁶⁶ Units could be devices, themes, tropes, genres or systems. For Moretti, distant reading should not replace qualitative approaches to literature, but should help “to understand the larger structures within which [literary texts] have a meaning in the first place.”¹⁶⁷ Inspired by Moretti, Bob Nicholson has performed this combination of a micro and macro analysis on late Victorian newspapers, investigating the growing presence of America in the Victorian press. Nicholson identifies in the British daily press “the formation of a powerful transatlantic ‘contact zone’; a cultural space which facilitated a range of new Anglo-American encounters, exchanges and debates.”¹⁶⁸ According to him, the process of Americanization of the British press “first allowed the fruits of American mass culture to reach a mass audience on

¹⁶⁵ Bob Nicholson has counted at least 1.6 million books published in nineteenth-century Britain, to which must add “millions of pages of newspapers, magazines, periodicals, pamphlets, playbooks, advertisements.” Bob Nicholson, “Counting Culture; or, How to Read Victorian Newspapers from a Distance,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 17, no. 2 (2012): 238.

¹⁶⁶ Franco Moretti, “Conjectures on World Literature,” *New Left Review*, no. 1 (2000): 57.

¹⁶⁷ Franco Moretti, “Graphs, Maps, Trees: Abstract Models for Literary History – 3.” *New Left Review*, no. 28 (2004): 63.

¹⁶⁸ Bob Nicholson, “Looming Large: America and the Late-Victorian Press, 1865-1902,” PhD Thesis (University of Manchester, 2012), 11.

this side of the Atlantic [...] on a daily basis.”¹⁶⁹ Drawing inspiration from Nicholson, this chapter performs a “distant reading” of the Japanese presence in newspapers published in the North East from 1850 to 1913.

Past analyses of the representation of Japan in the Victorian press confirms the heterogenous and complex image of the Asian country in the eye of Victorians, which includes both exotic stereotypes as well as accurate, journalistic accounts. Considering British periodicals during the period from 1850 to 1880, Yokoyama Toshio concludes that until the mid-1860s Japan was generally put in analogy with Britain, emphasising the closeness between the two nations. During the following ten years, Victorian writers tended to underline the opposite feeling, the “remoteness,” also with the scope of satirising Britain without overexposing themselves; while, from the mid-1870s, the tendency was to create the romantic image of Japan as an fairyland.¹⁷⁰ In his analysis of two British illustrated newspapers, the *Graphic* and the *Illustrated London News*, Terry Bennett demonstrates that the narrative about Japan in Victorian times was mostly characterised by a patronising tone built upon a fascination with the exotic, which persisted until the Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) when Japan revealed its new status of military power to be reckoned with.¹⁷¹

In order to uncover whether similar patterns occurred in the North East, the presence of Japan in regional newspapers is analysed in this chapter by addressing the following question: *how much of Japan could be encountered on a daily basis and what were the main discourses concerning Japanese culture?*

To provide a comprehensive answer, three different phases have been identified and analysed: from 1850 to 1871, from 1872 to 1893, and from 1894 to 1913. The first phase consists of the period between the years right before the opening of Japan in 1854 to the second visit of Japanese officials in the region in 1872. The genuine curiosity and enthusiasm linked to the epochal change in Japanese history characterised this first period, leading to a sort of euphoria. The second phase begins with the visit of Japanese officials to the North East in 1872, which represented to the people in the region the first sign that Japan was embracing a substantial

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 226.

¹⁷⁰ Toshio Yokoyama, *Japan in the Victorian Mind: A Study of Stereotyped Images of a Nation, 1850-80* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987), 170-175.

¹⁷¹ Terry Bennett, ed., *Japan and The Illustrated London News: Complete Record of Reported Events, 1853–1899* (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2006); Terry Bennett, ed., *Japan and The Graphic: A Complete Record of Events, 1870-1899*, edited by (London: Global Oriental, 2011).

process of modernisation, symbolised by the adoption of Western dress. While newspapers reinforced this impression by way of numerous articles concerning international trade agreements between local companies and Japan, the pages of regional daily papers were also filled with references to the “Old” Japan. Lastly, newspaper articles after Japan’s success in the Sino-Japanese War in 1894 put under scrutiny previous preconceptions about Japan given the unexpected, aggressive attitude manifested by the Japanese.

By embracing this ambiguity, newspapers in the North East played the role of contact zone between local communities and transcultural flows of “Old” and “New” Japan, reinforcing the dualism between the two, as well as legitimising a change of perspective on Japanese people after the Sino-Japanese War. As newspapers were the readiest sources of information, they placed Japan in the everyday discourse, associating “Old” Japan with an appreciation of the unchanging Japanese culture and its artistic objects, and “New” Japan with an admiration of Japanese economic and social progress. Instead of pointing at the potential conflict, newspaper editors took advantage of this dualism, satisfying the readers’ desire for information linked to each of these two images of the country.

Newspapers in Newcastle and in the North East

In order to understand the ways in which newspapers covered Japan in the North East of England, an overview of the press industry in this region must be given. Considering that from the first half of the nineteenth century, London daily newspapers were easily available in Newcastle the day after they were published, it appears clear that provincial newspapers had to provide another service in order to be successful. According to Michael Preston, “the provincial press [...] did act as a filter of the mass of news available, and provided information relevant to the local community.”¹⁷²

This mediating role was prominent since the early eighteenth century. The first local newspaper to be published was the *New-castle Gazette: or the Northern Courant* appeared in 1710, followed by the High Tory *Newcastle Courant*, first issued in 1711 and independent until 1876. In the following part of the eighteenth century, a further three newspapers started to be printed in Newcastle: the moderate Whig *Newcastle Journal* (from 1739 to 1788),¹⁷³ the radical

¹⁷² Michael Preston, “The Newcastle Journal 1832-1950,” *Newspaper in the Northeast. The ‘Fourth Estate’ at Work in Northumberland & Durham*, edited by Peter Isaac (Wylam: Allenholme Press, 1999), 166.

¹⁷³ A homonymous newspaper was later published in Newcastle from 1832, but with a Tories political alignment. *Ibid.*, 112-139.

Newcastle Chronicle (1764-1953) and the *Newcastle Advertiser* (1788-1814).¹⁷⁴ Among the other towns of the area, only Durham and Darlington started to produce newspapers before 1800: respectively the *Durham Courant* (1733-1740)¹⁷⁵ and the *Darlington Mercury* (1772-1773).¹⁷⁶ As Frank Manders states, “the content of the early titles was overwhelmingly a reprint of news from London papers: local news was virtually non-existent in the early years.”¹⁷⁷

In the nineteenth century the thirst for information increased, and further newspapers began to be published in various parts of the North East. In the northernmost point of the region such as Berwick upon Tweed, the *Berwick Advertiser* started to be printed from 1808; while a further two titles were launched in Durham, namely the *Durham Advertiser* (from 1814) and the *Durham Chronicle* (from 1820 to 1930). From the 1830s, Sunderland had three titles: the *Sunderland & Durham General Shipping Gazette and Mercantile Advertiser* (from 1831), the Whig/Liberal *Sunderland Herald* (1831-1906) and the *Sunderland Beacon/Norther Times/Sunderland Times* (1838-1878).¹⁷⁸

From the mid-nineteenth century, this expansion was further stimulated by various tax reductions such as the abolishment of the newspaper tax in 1855 and the removal of the paper duty in 1861. For instance, in 1853 Newcastle and Sunderland had four newspapers, Durham and Berwick two, Gateshead, South Shields and Darlington one. By the end of the 1860s, Newcastle had nine new titles, Sunderland ten, Darlington four. Furthermore, even provincial towns began to print their local newspaper, such as the *Alnwick Mercury* (from 1854), the *Morpeth Herald* (from 1854), the *Chester-Le-Street Liberal* (from 1856), the *Northern Eastern News* (Seaham Harbour, from 1857), the *Hexham Courant* (from 1864) and *Hexham Herald* (from 1868). Overall, in the region, at least 69 new titles were published between 1853 and 1870.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ The *Newcastle Advertiser* was later moved to Durham changing its name in *Durham Advertiser*.

¹⁷⁵ Not a single issue has survived.

¹⁷⁶ The *Darlington Mercury* was anticipated by the short-lived *Darlington Pamphlet* (1772).

¹⁷⁷ Frank Manders, “History of the Newspaper Press in Northeast England,” *Newspaper in the Northeast. The ‘Fourth Estate’ at Work in Northumberland & Durham*, edited by Peter Isaac (Wylam: Allenholme Press, 1999), 2.

¹⁷⁸ The *Sunderland Beacon/Norther Times/Sunderland Times* tries repeatedly to rival the *Sunderland Herald*, siding politically as a Tories newspaper, but after failings and change of ownerships the periodical became a Liberal newspaper in 1857. *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

Another important change was the rise of daily press, which Michael Preston links to the increase of middle-class average income:

“The demand for daily journalism grew amongst all sections of the community, particularly the middle classes who were now in a position to afford daily newspapers. The working classes maintained their allegiance to Sunday newspapers primarily, though undoubtedly many, in particular amongst the more skilled and better-paid workers, would have been able to afford the occasional daily newspaper.”¹⁸⁰

The first daily newspaper in the region was the *Northern Daily Express*, launched in April 1855. Initially, it was printed in Darlington, but six months later, it moved its offices to Newcastle. Other local newspapers followed the example of *Northern Daily Express*, and the *Newcastle Chronicle* and the *Newcastle Journal* began to publish daily editions, respectively in May 1858 and January 1861. Quickly after that, this new trend spread all over the region, from North Shields (the *Shields Daily News*, August 1864), Sunderland (the *Sunderland Daily Shipping News*, November 1865; and *Sunderland Daily Echo*, December 1873), Darlington (the *Northern Echo*, January 1870), to Hartlepool (the *Northern Evening Mail*, May 1877).¹⁸¹

Altogether, this large corpus of regional newspapers demonstrates that in the second half of the nineteenth and early twentieth century the people in the North East had regular access to international and national news not only from London papers, but also through newspapers published in the region which also punctually informed their readers with local news.

1850-1871

The first wave of interest in Japanese culture in the North East coincided with increasing numbers of local newspapers and their readership, which nurtured an environment in which both the genuine curiosity following the re-opening of Japan to the West in 1854 and the exotic fascination with Japan inherited from the previous century were able to flourish. This development is well demonstrated when viewing the dramatic increase of articles about Japan as tracked through one newspaper, the *Newcastle Courant*, during the period between 1850 and 1872 (Graph 1).

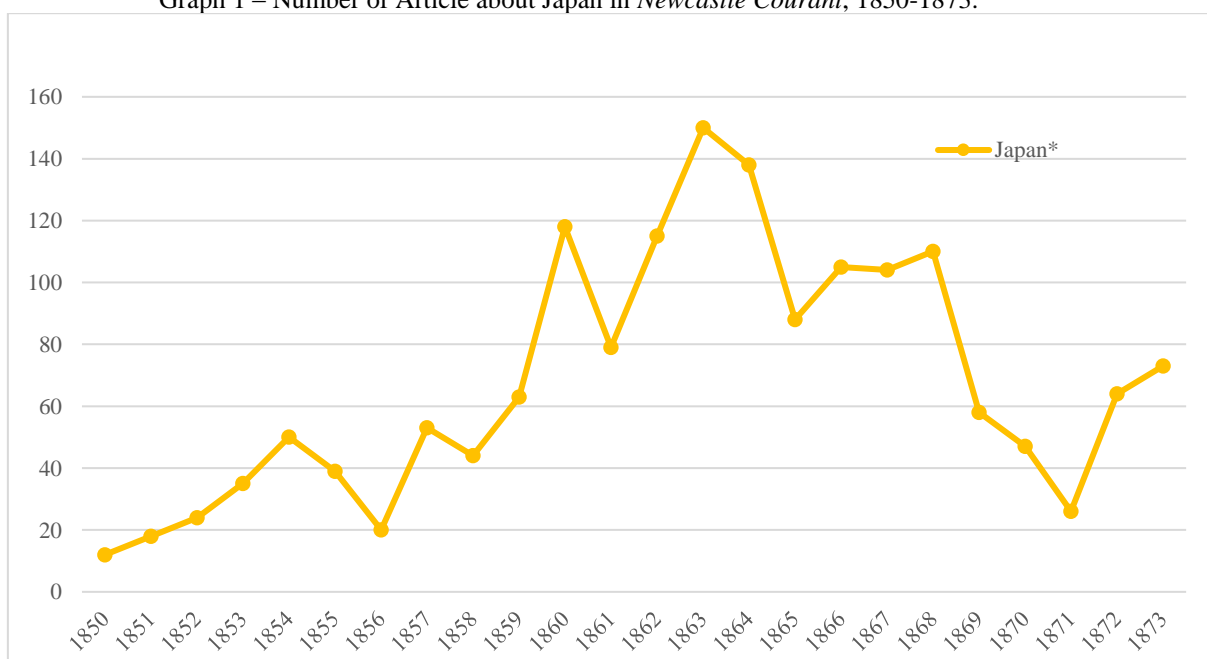
Studying the ways in which Japan was reported in the *Newcastle Courant* during this period, it is possible to demonstrate how the perception of Japan changed at the end of the 1850s. Before Japan opened to the West in 1854, most of the newspaper articles did not offer commentary on

¹⁸⁰ Preston, “The Newcastle Journal 1832-1950,” 122-123.

¹⁸¹ Manders, “History of the Newspaper Press in Northeast England,” 6.

the country of Japan. From 1850 and 1853,¹⁸² indeed, four-fifths of them contained the word “japan” in reference to the “japanning” technique,¹⁸³ a type of finish developed in Europe in the seventeenth century intended to imitate Japanese and East Asian lacquerware.¹⁸⁴ The terms “japanning,” “japanned,” and “japanner” were widely established in the British vocabulary since the late eighteenth century, and even the word “japan” was commonly used as a synonym of the aforementioned technique, as testified in an English dictionary published in 1792 (Figure 2).¹⁸⁵ From 1858, after the signing of the commercial treaties between Britain and Japan, there was a dramatic decrease in the number of advertisements using the word “Japan” to signify British-made Japanned goods (Graph 2 – *in blue*). This was probably a response to widespread news and other articles about Japan itself, which made no longer plausible the use of “Japan” when describing a decorative technique not directly linked to that country.¹⁸⁶

Graph 1 – Number of Article about Japan in *Newcastle Courant*, 1850-1873.



Source: British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁸² The article that announced the first Perry’s visit in Japan was published on the 14th October, even though the actual event occurred three months before, on July 1853. *Newcastle Courant*, 14th October 1853.

¹⁸³ The number of articles published in the *Newcastle Courant* before the 14th October 1853 that mention words containing “japan” is 78. Among them, only 15 are not related to the japanning finishing technique.

¹⁸⁴ For an introduction to japanning as a European decorative technique, see, Margaret Ballardie, “Japanning in Seventeenth-and Eighteenth-Century Europe,” *Painted Wood: History and Conservation*, edited by Valerie Dorge and Carey Howlett (Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 1998), 179-185.

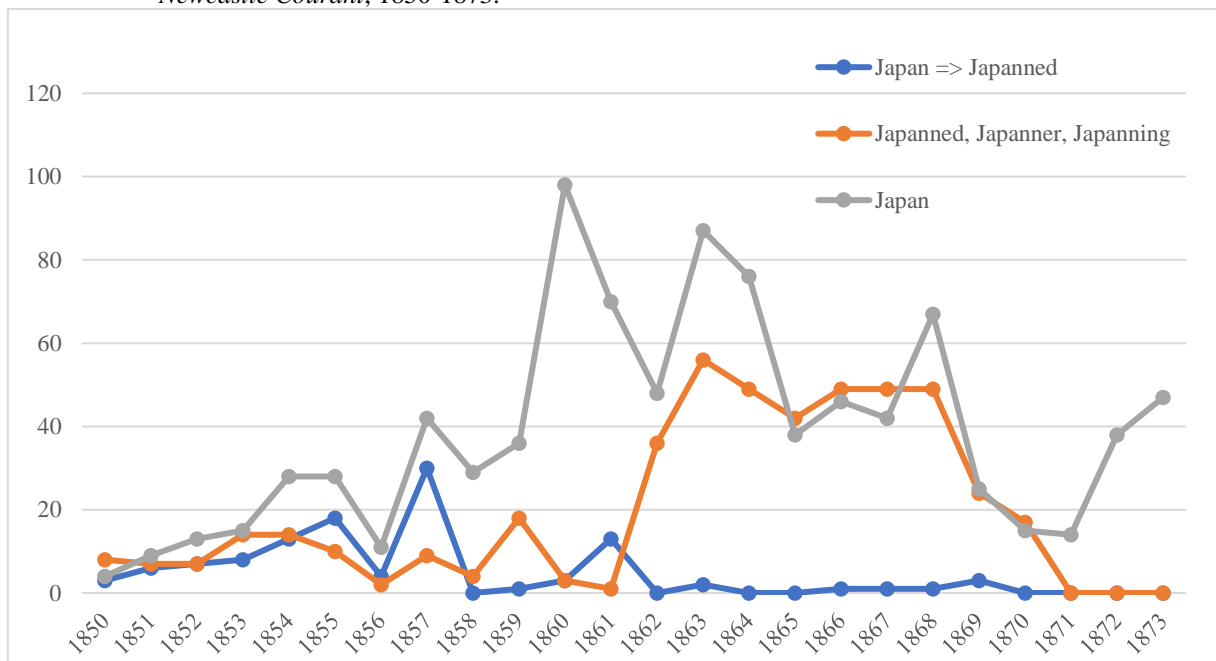
¹⁸⁵ This can be linked with a similar linguistic phenomenon occurred between the term “porcelain” and “china,” in other words, when the country that produces a specific good became a synonym of the good itself, even when it is not produced in the original country.

¹⁸⁶ From 30 in 1857 to 0 in 1858.

JAPA'N. *f.* [from *Japan* in *Asia*.] Work varnished and raised in gold and colours.
To JAPA'N. *v. a.* [from the noun.]
 1. To varnish, to embellish with gold and raised figures. *Swift.*
 2. To black shoes. A low phrase. *Gay.*
JAPA'NNER. *f.* [from *Japan*]
 1. One skilled in japan work.
 2. A shoeblacker. *Pope.*

Figure 2 – Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: Rivington, 1792).

Graph 2 – Number of Articles about Japan (Japan, Japanned, Japan as Japanned) in *Newcastle Courant*, 1850-1873.



Note: In the graph are listed terms related to Japan and the elicited in late Victorian readers, starting from “Japan” by itself (in grey); terms related to the japanning technique, such as “Japanner,” “Japanned,” “Japanning,” etc. (red); and the term “japan” when was used to imply “japanned” or “japanning” (blue).

Source: British Newspaper Archive.

Among the few published in the early 1850s,¹⁸⁷ an article devoted to the actual country of Japan confirms Yokoyama’s assertion that already at that time the basic mode of describing Japan as a country with unique and bizarre connotations was already established.¹⁸⁸ Entitled “Japan,” it

¹⁸⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 13 June 1851, 6.

¹⁸⁸ Yokoyama, *Japan in the Victorian Mind*, 2.

was an extract from a longer essay written by Henry Morley (1822-1894), originally published in its entirety in the *Household Words*, a weekly magazine printed in London and edited by Charles Dickens (1812-1870).¹⁸⁹ Morley's article was the fourth instalment of a series of six, one of which was written by James Hannay (1827-1873). Among the articles, only one was devoted to Japan, while the others were dedicated to Africa, Central America, "Northern Countries" (Scandinavia, North Pole, Greenland, Canada, etc.), China, and the "Antediluvian Period" (a reimagining of the biblical past). According to Morley, the main idea of the series was that "in our Phantom Ship we shall occasionally take a cruise, in order to see what is going on in various parts of the globe."¹⁹⁰ In other words, it might be defined as a fictional trip around the world based on information gathered from secondary, or even tertiary, sources. In the extract published in the *Newcastle Courant*, the simultaneous kindness and aggressivity of the Japanese is highlighted in a passage about Deshima: "[Dutchmen] entering this port are treated courteously, are supplied gratuitously with such necessaries as they want;" while "strangers attempting entry at any other port belonging to Japan are without ceremony fired upon as enemy."¹⁹¹ As suggested by Yokoyama, this contradictory behaviour of the Japanese was perceived as bizarre and contributed to establishing an image of Japan as a "singular country" even before its ports were opened.¹⁹²

While Morley stated that the absence of free trade in Japan was a fair limitation aimed to preserve its economic independence,¹⁹³ other commentators expressed their negative opinions about Japanese trade restrictions in the *Newcastle Courant*. Charles Toogood Downing, a surgeon who worked in China and wrote a book about his sojourn there,¹⁹⁴ delivered two lectures entitled "Empire of Japan" at the Newcastle Literary and Philosophical Society on the 20th and 22nd of December 1852. According to the report of the event published in the *Newcastle Courant*:

The attendance was numerous, and the lecturer in commencing, alluded in eloquent terms to the triumph of the principle of free-trade, and stated, that they not only had given an immense impetus

¹⁸⁹ See also, Ann Lohrli, *Household Words, a Weekly Journal 1850-1859, Conducted by Charles Dickens* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

¹⁹⁰ Henry Morley, "Our Phantom Ship: Negro Land," *Household Words* 2 (1851): 400.

¹⁹¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 13 June 1851, 6.

¹⁹² Yokoyama, *Japan in the Victorian Mind*, 170-175.

¹⁹³ "The Japanese authorities manage all sales for [the Dutch]; pay the minutest items of expenditure, and charge it on the profits of their trade, which are then placed on the return vessel, not in money, but in goods. The Japanese deal justly, even generously, in their way; but it is their way to allow the foreigners no money power." *Newcastle Courant*, 13 June 1851, 6.

¹⁹⁴ Charles Toogood Downing, *The Fan-qui in China, in 1836-7* (London: Henry Colburn, 1838)

to commerce generally, but had excited additional enterprise in merchants to search [...] new and profitable sources of trade. [...] The Japanese, as a people, had most rigorously prohibited all foreign intercourse, but the time had come, when it was deemed of matter of prosperity to compel them to open out some intercourse with other nations. China, for instance, had been compelled to do so, and America, it was well known, contemplated an expedition to Japan for a similar object.¹⁹⁵

It appears clear from this extract that the imperialistic idea of exporting free trade functioned as a synonym of modernisation and civilization for Downing.¹⁹⁶ In addition, more than just sharing his knowledge about the “singular country,” Downing also helped spread among Newcastle intellectuals the feverish excitement for the upcoming opening of Japan. William Hutt (1801-1882), Member of Parliament who stood for the seat of Gateshead, mentioned two years later in a local meeting that Japan was among the “[...] the most misgoverned countries in the world” because of its trade restrictions which were totally against the principle of free trade that Britain adopted achieving “triumphant [results] beyond question!”¹⁹⁷

Although the number of newspaper articles related to Japan increased following the success of the American expedition in 1854,¹⁹⁸ the image of the country portrayed in the newspapers published in the North East was far from accurate. For example, the Emperor of Japan and the shogun were often confused.¹⁹⁹ In February 1854 the death of the Emperor was announced, however, it was the Shogun Tokugawa Ieyoshi who died (1793-1853).²⁰⁰ In 1858, an article asserted that in Japan there were two emperors, one temporal and one spiritual.²⁰¹ This low degree of accuracy demonstrates that the general perception of Japan was confused.

Rather than the opening of Japanese ports in 1854, it was the signing of commercial treaties with the United States, Holland, Russia, Britain, and France in 1858 that stimulated a more informed discussion about Japan in the regional press. In response to the success of the British negotiations led by Lord Elgin, the editor of the *Newcastle Courant* published three articles

¹⁹⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 24 December 1852, 5.

¹⁹⁶ For an introduction to the concept of British “Imperialism of Free Trade,” see, Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power, and the Origins of Our Times* (London: Verso, 1994), 54-58. The term was coined in John Gallagher and Ronald Robinson, “The Imperialism of Free Trade,” *The Economic History Review* 6, no. 1 (1953): 1-15.

¹⁹⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 20 January 1854.

¹⁹⁸ In October 1854 the British also signed a treaty with Japan, likewise the one negotiated by Commodore Perry for the United States. The first reference to this event appeared in the *Newcastle Courant*, only on the 5th of January 1855.

¹⁹⁹ In pre-modern Japan, even if nominally appointed by the Emperor, the shogun *de facto* ruled the country through a sort of military dictatorship. Accordingly, the role of the Emperor was mainly symbolic until the Meiji restoration in 1867.

²⁰⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 3 February 1854.

²⁰¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 3 December 1858.

about Japan in the issue that followed the announcement of the treaty.²⁰² While the first explains the details of the agreement in imperialistic tones, underlining the unidirectional concessions that Japan granted to Britain;²⁰³ the other two articles offer an image of Japan slightly different from the other “exploitable” countries. Taken from the *Morning Post*, the second article is an enthusiastic description of the Japanese products to import in Britain: from commodities such as rice, tea, cotton, to fine manufactories such as ceramic, lacquerware and steel swords.²⁰⁴ However, rather than underlining the potential profits from the British perspective, the article concludes that “some of their manufactures and raw products may be exchanged against ours with mutual advantage.”²⁰⁵ The third mentions Japanese “cleanliness” and “eagerness for knowledge,”²⁰⁶ but more importantly, informs that:

You cannot be five minutes in Japan without seeing it is a progressive nation - the country towns, houses, and people all show this. [...] Everything is done by themselves, and when it is considered that it is not much more than ten years ago since they made this start, the advance they have made in that short time is perfectly wonderful.²⁰⁷

Altogether, these newspaper articles left the readers in the North East to imagine Japan as a country which had no choice but signing “unequal treaties,” or alternatively, a potential commercial ally. The fact that such articles appeared in the same newspaper issue further demonstrates that since the early time, the embryonic understanding of Japan in the North East of England was characterised by an accepted but conflictual ambiguity.

In addition, the excitement about the signing of commercial treaties between Britain and Japan directly impacted also on the regional community through retailers. From August 1860, William Stewart, a Newcastle tea dealer, started to sell Japanese green tea in his shop at 33 Granger Street. Stewart was well aware of the excitement stirred by the opening of trade with Japan, as demonstrated by the advertisement he published:

The treaty with this secluded and wonderful people has introduced into our country this season of specimen of Tea grown by and for the sole use of the Japanese themselves.²⁰⁸

²⁰² The treaty was signed in August 1858 and the announcement appeared in the *Newcastle Courant* on the 5th of November.

²⁰³ *Newcastle Courant*, 12 November 1858, 6. Originally, it was published in *The Times*.

²⁰⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 12 November 1858, 6.

²⁰⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 12 November 1858, 6.

²⁰⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 12 November 1858, 6-7.

²⁰⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 12 November 1858, 7.

²⁰⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 24 August 1860, 4.

Rather than a country with no direct connection with the West, Japan began to be depicted as a nation with which people in the North East could find a way to relate by consuming Japanese green tea.

The local curiosity in Japan was satisfied by various articles about Japanese manners that appeared in the *Newcastle Courant*, as well as reports by correspondents in Japan. The former were generally extracted from other publications such as periodicals of national distribution,²⁰⁹ or books,²¹⁰ and the scope of topics ranged from Japanese security and dispensing justice,²¹¹ to the multiple use of Japanese-made paper,²¹² Japanese domestic architecture, and the social position of women,²¹³ and men.²¹⁴ These articles generally portrayed Japan positively, and demonstrate the crucial role played by provincial newspapers in spreading knowledge of Japan in every part of Britain.

However, from the early 1860s, such articles became rarer, replaced by more frequent reports of correspondents settled in Japan who were working for major British and American newspapers. During those years, the Japanese government was suffering a political crisis, and a malcontent fringe of Japanese decided to target foreigners in Japan.²¹⁵ The most dramatic event during this period was the attack on the British Legation in Edo in 1861, extensively covered by articles published in the *Newcastle Courant*.²¹⁶ This violent and chaotic side of the Japanese surprised Victorian commentators such as Rutherford Alcock (1809-1897), the first British Consul in Japan, who in his book *The Capital of the Tycoon* (1863) associates this “primitive” violence with a feudal society.²¹⁷ As Gordon Daniels suggests, this “darker” analysis of Japan was influenced by Alcock’s direct experience of anti-foreign brutalities in

²⁰⁹ Mainly *Blackwood’s Magazine*, and on one occasion *Fraser’s Magazine*. *Newcastle Courant*, 10 December 1858.

²¹⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 4 February 1859, 2.

²¹¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 28 January 1859.

²¹² *Newcastle Courant*, 13 May 1859.

²¹³ *Newcastle Courant*, 7 January 1859. Regarding Japanese woman, another article appeared one year later, on the 6th of January 1860.

²¹⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 25 November 1859. Regarding the Japanese climate, another article appeared on the 10th of February 1860.

²¹⁵ The first article on this topic appeared on the 27th of April 1860, and it was followed by many others: *Newcastle Courant*, 11 May 1860, 29 June 1860, 13 July 1860, 22 February 1861, and 12 April 1861.

²¹⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 4 October 1861, 6; *Newcastle Courant*, 1 November 1861, 6.

²¹⁷ Rutherford Alcock, *The Capital of the Tycoon: A Narrative of a Three Years’ Residence in Japan* (London: Longman Green, 1863), xix.

1861.²¹⁸ It appears clear that the early enthusiasm about Japan was crushed by the harsh reality of a country that was suffering a tumultuous political situation.

Despite the reports of violent attacks against foreigners, the prominent impression of Japan remained extremely positive in the North East, particularly because two important events diverted public opinion's attention away from these criticisms in 1862: the International Exposition in London, and the arrival of a Japanese diplomatic mission in Newcastle. As many scholars agree, the Japanese collection assembled by Sir Rutherford Alcock and exhibited at the London International Exposition popularised the interest in everything Japanese among a wide audience, receiving mostly positive reviews from British artists, architects and designers, succeeding in emancipating Japanese art and craft from being lumped with other generic "Oriental" manufactures.²¹⁹ The presence of the Japan Court at the London International Exhibition was announced in regional newspapers almost a year in advance of the exhibition, and the articles were almost exclusively extracted from London papers.²²⁰ In an article that appeared one month before the opening of the exhibition, the section arranged by Alcock was depicted as a "Japanese Encyclopaedia" in which beyond "rare lacker [sic] ware and [...] wonderful egg-shell porcelain," the collection consisted also of "works of natural history and chemistry, a quadrant and sundial, a compass, a pedometer, a thermometer, and a telescope," as well as curiosities such as "a thick cable of human hair" or "lava from Fusigama [sic Mt. Fuji]."²²¹ In the text, it can be recognised the attempt to display a comprehensive and representative material account of Japanese culture as a whole. After the opening of the exhibition, however, the aspect receiving the most detailed account in the *Newcastle Courant*

²¹⁸ Gordon Daniels, "Elites, Governments and Citizens: Some British Perceptions of Japan, 1850–2000," *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations 1600–2000. Vol. V*, edited by Gordon Daniels and Chushichi Tsuzuki (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 5.

²¹⁹ As argued by Yuko Kikuchi and Toshio Watanabe, Alcock's limited knowledge of Japanese art history led him to select pieces of Japanese craftsmanship with no specific criteria, and woodblock prints, silk kimonos, ceremonial masks and valuable porcelain objects were mixed with the vernacular straw raincoats and hats of Japanese peasants, rural work clothes, straw shoes, and other objects of daily use. See, Yuko Kikuchi and Toshio Watanabe, "British Discovery of Japanese Art," *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000. Vol. V* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 151-152. Despite Alcock's efforts, this arrangement disappointed some of the Japanese officials who visited the exhibition. The objects on display were considered of low quality and not representative of the Japanese excellence in craftsmanship. See, Chelsea Foxwell, "Japan as Museum? Encapsulating Change and Loss in Late-Nineteenth-Century Japan," *Getty Research Journal*, no. 1 (2009): 40.

²²⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 27 September 1861, 6.

²²¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 4 April 1862, 3.

was the presence of Japanese diplomats,²²² who “were, of course, the objects of unmeasured curiosity. Their dresses were plain in colour, but rich in material. They wore two swords; which, in their land, are the highest insignia of aristocracy.”²²³ This positive impression regarding their attire was extracted from an article that appeared in the *Times* a few days before,²²⁴ which, as underlined by Cortazzi,²²⁵ contrasted with the negative opinion reported in the *Illustrated London News*:

To be candid, their attire was of the kind generally denominated ‘seedy.’ The spectacle of half a dozen middle-aged parties with half-shaven heads, dingy blouses, brown holland inexpressibles, and paper boots did not exactly come up to our notion of the magnificent.²²⁶

As demonstrated by Stephan Pigeon, Victorian editors, with a specific readership in mind, carefully selected the original source from which to extract the text.²²⁷ Given that three weeks later the Japanese envoy would visit Newcastle, it might be suggested that the *Newcastle Courant*’s editor played their part by choosing to derive information concerning Japan from the enthusiastic *Times* article, thereby contributing to heightened expectations among the local community.

The result of these expectations was testified by the huge crowd that the Japanese diplomats saw at the train station when they arrived in Newcastle from London on the 26th of May. The event is reported in the three-column article which appeared on the *Courant* on the 30th of May:

Long before the hour - half-past four - at which they were expected to arrive at the Central Station, Newcastle, an immense number of spectators had assembled outside the station, in expectation of obtaining a sight of them on alighting from the train. To prevent uncomfortable crowding, the various accesses to the station were guarded by porters and others, who only admitted a privileged number. Notwithstanding these precautions, so eager was the desire to look upon the unusual spectacle that, by some means or other, the interior of the station soon presented as crowded an appearance as the street without.²²⁸

²²² The Japanese arrived in England on the 29th of April 1862, as part of a European tour that also visited France, Holland, Prussia, and Russia. Its official aim was to postpone by five years the opening of further cities and ports (Tokyo, Osaka, Hyogo and Niigata) to foreign trade, and the Embassy succeeded in its objective signing the *London Protocol* on the 6th of June. See, Michael Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 86. See also William Beasley, *Japan Encounters the Barbarian: Japanese Travellers in America and Europe* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1995), 71-94.

²²³ *Newcastle Courant*, 9 May 1862, 3.

²²⁴ *The Times*, 2 May 1862, 11.

²²⁵ Sir Hugh Cortazzi, “Japanese Envoys in Britain, 1862-72,” *Japanese Envoys in Britain, 1862-1964*, edited by Ian Nish (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2007), 11.

²²⁶ *Illustrated London News*, 10 May 1862, 25.

²²⁷ Stephan Pigeon, “Steal it, Change it, Print it: Transatlantic Scissors-and-Paste Journalism in the Ladies’ Treasury, 1857–1895,” *Journal of Victorian Culture* 22, no. 1 (2017): 24-39.

²²⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 30 May 1862, 2.

This and other articles in other newspapers in the North East report in detail all of the Japanese delegates' movements in Newcastle and surrounding areas: at the local theatre, and the following morning, at the North Seaton Colliery, where they examined the coal-mining site and even descended into the pit.²²⁹ Everywhere the group went, it received the same warm welcome by the curious crowds. In the afternoon of the last day, when the Japanese group departed, heading to Liverpool via Carlisle, Sheriff B. Plummer offered to the ambassadors "copies of Lambert's views of Newcastle and the neighbourhood," probably made by M. and M. W. Lambert, local lithographers.²³⁰ Overall, the newspaper articles were focused on delivering a detailed report of the Japanese Embassy's visit at the North Seaton Colliery, a decision that confirmed how proud the North Eastern community was about their industrial excellences.²³¹

In line with the articles published in London newspapers,²³² the North-East press associated the facial features, appearance, and attire of the Japanese men as feminine, which contributed to emphasising their total foreignness and served to legitimise the British dominant position. For example, the *Newcastle Courant* affirms that "the faces of these interesting visitors seemed destitute of manliness, or indication of energy,"²³³ an impression that is linked to their "whole costume," which:

like that of most orientals, conveys the notion that the wearers are unaccustomed to laborious or continued physical exertion; and when worn by persons of this short stature, and cleanly-shaved faces, conveyed to an English eye the impression that the wearers might possibly belong to the gentler sex of humanity.²³⁴

The same idea is echoed in the article appeared in *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, where it is stated that:

[Japanese] dress can scarcely be called picturesque or convenient, consisting as it does of loose robes of sombre colours, which hang loosely about their persons giving them a very feminine appearance.²³⁵

²²⁹ *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 27 May 1862; *Shields Daily Gazette*, 29 May 1862, 4; *Newcastle Courant*, 30 May 1862, 2; *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 31 May 1862, 6. See also, Marie Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England: From 1862 to the Present Day* (London: Athlone, 1989), 7-8.

²³⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 30 May 1862, 2.

²³¹ See *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 27 May 1862, in Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 6-7.

²³² *The Morning of Star*, 2 May 1862, 5.

²³³ *Newcastle Courant*, 30 May 1862, 2.

²³⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 30 May 1862, 2.

²³⁵ *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 31 May 1862, 6. The article has many parts in common with the text appeared in the *Courant*, the day before, but also some original additions, such as the extract quoted. The phrase "sombre colour" may be a directed reference to Sherard Osborn, "A Cruise in Japanese waters — Part II." *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 85, no. 519 (1859): 51.

Even objects of masculine interest, such as the two swords worn by each Japanese diplomats, were undermined “as a general rule the expression of their countenances by no means corresponded with [a] warlike equipment.”²³⁶ By associating feminine connotations with formal masculine dress and asserting a lack of manliness among these samurai, the authors of these articles not only emphasised the cultural distance between the Japanese and British way of dressing, but also reinforced the subordinate position of Japan to Britain, whose dominance was further legitimised by its masculine characteristics.²³⁷ The comparison between the two cultures is explicitly drawn in the *Courant* article:

[Japanese] civilisation has probably been in advance of us as respects many of the conveniences and appliances of daily life; but nothing in their history can be compared to the energy and daring with which the Englishman grapples with physical difficulties and the powers of nature.²³⁸

Again, the criteria which validate British superiority are found in the masculine strength and boldness attributed to the Englishmen.

While the Japanese diplomatic visit to Newcastle consolidated the feminine impression of Japan in the eyes of the people in the North East, just a few months later, another episode of anti-foreign violence in Japan underlined the aggressive attitude of the Japanese: the assassination of Charles Lennox Richardson on the 14th of September 1862. Richardson, a British merchant who had just retired from his successful business in China, was visiting Japan before returning home to England. While travelling on the Tōkaidō road with three companions,²³⁹ Richardson and his party encountered the retinue of the Satsuma regent, daimyō Shimazu Hisamitsu. The daimyō’s bodyguards expected that the group would dismount to pay respect, but the party’s lack of cultural awareness and inability to understand any Japanese meant that the British failed to comply with this rigid custom. Richardson and two of his companions, Mr. Clark, Mr. Marshall, were attacked by the Japanese, while the fourth, a lady named Mrs Borrodaile, luckily escaped unharmed.²⁴⁰

²³⁶ *Shields Daily Gazette*, 29 May 1862, 4.

²³⁷ Elizabeth Kramer, “‘Not so Japan-Easy’: The British Reception of Japanese Dress in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Textile History* 44, no. 1 (2013): 6.

²³⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 30 May 1862, 2.

²³⁹ The Tōkaidō road is an historical communication route that connects Tokyo to Kyoto.

²⁴⁰ Historians are still debating about the actual chain of events that resulted in the assassination of Richardson, and to what extent the anti-foreign sentiment shared among Japanese samurai as well as the Englishman’s insensitivity in regard to the Japanese customs were the main cause of this altercation. William G. Beasley accuses Richardson as having often been “high-handed” with the Japanese during his journey, in *The Rise of*

The papers in the North East of England that reported the news about this murder were ambivalent in their judgment, which reflected the limitation of mid-nineteenth century international journalism. Initially, Richardson and his party were depicted as reckless and irresponsible tourists who partly deserved to be punished by the Japanese. For example, the first article that reported the event, entitled “Why Mr Richardson was killed,” states:

The mounted party came into direct collision with the Daimio himself, and, in place of getting off the road, which they could have done with the greatest ease, they remained upon it, drawing to one side only. They were then attacked when they immediately got off the road, but by this time the fatal blows had been received by Richardson. That any blows were aimed at Mrs Borrodaile the Japanese deny; they never strike at women with cutting instruments, and facts tend to support their statement, inasmuch as Mrs Borrodaile’s hat, as stated, was not cut in two, but picked up entire, having been lost by her in her flight.²⁴¹

The article, which was extracted from the *London & China Telegraph*, a newspaper published in the capital that specialised on the East-Asian context, also reminds the reader that:

The Japanese authorities intimated that it was desirable that foreigners should not be riding on the Tokaido, or great public road, on the 15th of September last, because it was probable that Daimios [sic] with their hosts of feudal retainers, unaccustomed to the sight of foreigners, would be travelling on it. This was notified to the community.²⁴²

This account of the events casts Richardson and his companions under a bad light, providing an explanation that justifies the Japanese actions.

In contrast, a few weeks later, two different regional newspapers published the same article, in which the assassination was described as “a dreadful political murder. [...] Charles Lennox Richardson, of Shanghai, [...] was murdered in cold blood.”²⁴³ Moreover, the *Shields Daily Gazette* even demanded the punishment of the murderers.²⁴⁴ Another article was published in early December in the *Newcastle Courant*, this time extracted from the *Japanese Express*, illustrated an entirely different scenario:

A Japanese boy, who says he witnessed the whole affair, saw Richardson sitting on the ground and begging for a drink of water. At this moment a noriman [sic *norimono*, palanquin] stopped, and the

Modern Japan: Political, Economic and Social Change since 1850 (Toronto: Phoenix Press, 2000), 44. Similarly, Folker Reichert suggests that it was Richardson’s disrespectful ride in the middle of the road that ultimately triggered the daimyō’s bodyguards, in Folker Reichert, “Mord in Namamugi,” *Damals* 45, no. 3 (2013): 66–69. Louis G. Perez, instead, notes that the incident mainly “reflects the widespread anti-foreign sentiment that had emerged among many Japanese people since the country was forced open in 1854.” Perez, Louis G. *Japan at War: An Encyclopaedia*. Santa Barbara, California; Denver, Colorado; Oxford, England: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 261. Every scholar, however, agrees that the differing and contrasting accounts of the event that leave open the door to multiple interpretations.

²⁴¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 6 November 1863, 2.

²⁴² *Newcastle Courant*, 6 November 1863, 2.

²⁴³ *Newcastle Journal*, 17 November 1862, 3; *Newcastle Courant*, 21 November 1862, 6.

²⁴⁴ *Shields Daily Gazette*, 20 November 1862, 6.

occupant asked, 'what was the difficulty.' He was answered, 'Only a foreign' (R'yo-zin bakara). This man got out of the noriman [sic] and inflicted several wounds.²⁴⁵

In just one month, this change of perspective reflects the plurality of opinions concerning the questionable behaviour of British people in Japan as well as the aggressive reaction by the Japanese to the presence of foreigners' communities. Although they probably created even more confusion, it is worth pointing out that provincial newspapers attempted to address this international issue, keeping their readers informed also about its aftermath, such as the bombardment of Kagoshima in 1863.²⁴⁶

Although not mentioned in local newspapers, the North East was partially involved in the British military operations in Japan following the assassination of Richardson, as well as in the civil war which broke out in the East Asian country between forces in favour of the restoration of the imperial political power and the Tokugawa shogunate. During the bombing of Kagoshima (1863) and a few months later in the Battle of Shimonoseki in the Chōshū province, the Japanese were subjected to the destructive power of Armstrong guns in real war scenarios.²⁴⁷ Carried on the British ships, Armstrong's 40-pounders and 110-pounders made a strong impression on the Japanese officials, even if the performances of the latter type of artillery was not impeccable.²⁴⁸ After the battles of Kagoshima and Shimonoseki, Satsuma and Chōshū daimyos, as well as the Tokugawa shogunate ordered guns and ammunition from Elswick via Thomas Glover, a Scottish merchant affiliated with Jardine Matheson and settled in Nagasaki.²⁴⁹ Armstrong guns were employed in the following military campaigns fought by Satsuma and Chōshū armies which resulted in the restoration of the Imperial political power in 1869 and the end of the Tokugawa regime (Figure 3).²⁵⁰ As discussed by Marie Conte-Helm, "future leaders of Meiji Japan were to see in Armstrong's firm a source for the technology that

²⁴⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 5 December 1862, 6.

²⁴⁶ After the assassination of Richardson, the British government demanded the punishment of the murderers responsible and a reparation consisting of a monetary indemnity. Initially the Satsuma regent refused to pay, so in August 1863 seven British warships were sent to Kagoshima, the chief town of the Satsuma domain, in order to persuade him. The negotiations were unsuccessfully, and a three-day battle ensued. Kagoshima was bombed and the Satsuma daimyo complied with the British request for reparation.

²⁴⁷ The members of the Bakufu mission who came to Britain in 1862 had the chance to witness the latest type of Armstrong guns at the Royal Gun Factory at Woolwich *The Times*, 8 May 1862. However, it was just a technical demonstration.

²⁴⁸ Henrietta Heald, *William Armstrong: Magician of the North* (Alnwick: Northumbria Press, 2010), 202-203.

²⁴⁹ Shinya Sugiyama, "Thomas B. Glover: A British Merchant in Japan, 1861-70," *Business History* 26, no. 2 (1984): 124-125, 130-131; Gavin Weightman, *The Industrial Revolutionaries* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007), 287-296; Alexander McKay, *Scottish Samurai: Thomas Blake Glover, 1838-1911* (Edinburgh: Cannongate, 1993).

²⁵⁰ Also known as Boshin War (1868-1869). See, Gabriele Esposito, *Japanese Armies 1868-1877: The Boshin War and Satsuma Rebellion* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2020), 23-34, 40-41.

would transform their country in the years to come.”²⁵¹ In other words, the trade relationship between Japan and the North East which flourished in the following decades is linked to the role played by Armstrong guns in Japan during the 1860s.

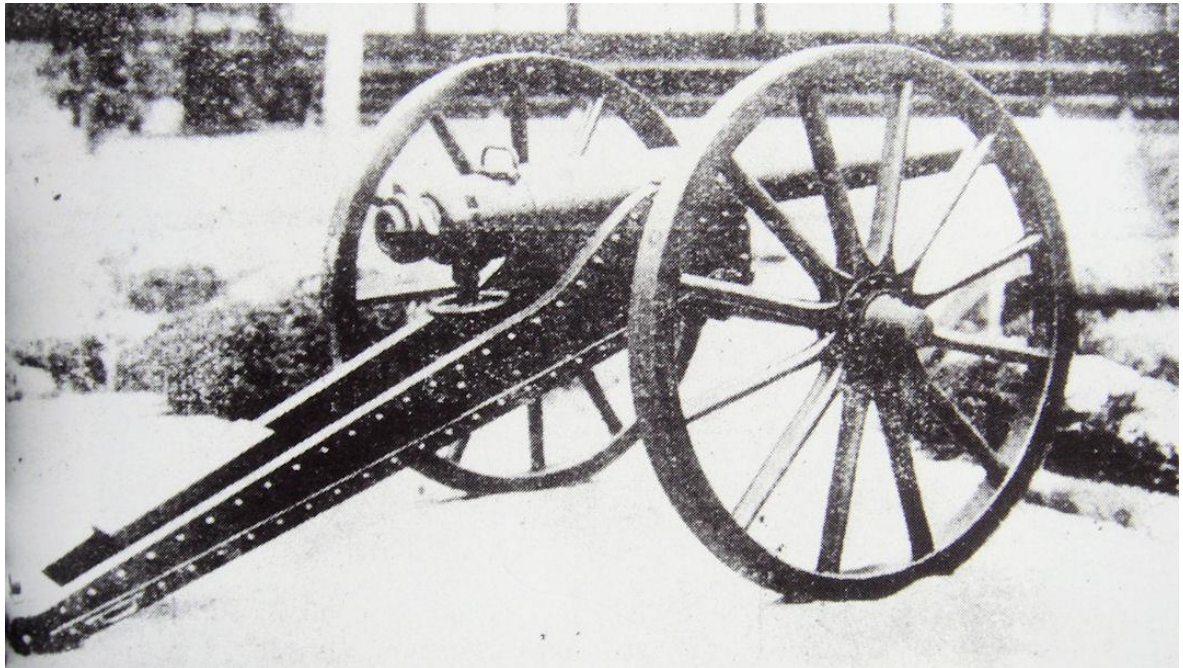


Figure 3 – An Armstrong cannon used by the Saga Domain at the battle of Ueno during the Boshin War, 1868. Photograph. *Bakumatsu Meiji Kosha Shincho*. Public Domain.

1872-1893

The victory of the imperial faction in 1868 signalled the beginning of the Meiji Era (1868-1912) and led to the formation of a new government which invested in the industrialisation of the country.²⁵² Contrastingly, the fascination with Japan’s exoticness began to flourish, which affected a wide audience in Britain who identified in the decorative arts and culture of Japan the pre-industrial values perceived to have been lost at home. As theorised by Chris Bongie in his literary studies, exoticism and modernity are linked to each other by a particular relationship. The former positioned the Other “outside or beyond the confines of a ‘civilization’ [...], that by virtue of its *modernity*, was perceived by many writers as being incompatible with certain essential values – or, indeed, the realm of the value itself.”²⁵³ Thus, European exoticism was ultimately “a discursive practice intent on recovering ‘elsewhere’ values ‘lost’ with the

²⁵¹ Marie Conte-Helm, “Armstrong’s, Vickers and Japan,” in *Britain & Japan: Biographical Portraits*, Vol. I (Richmond: Japan Library, 1994).

²⁵² David G. Wittner, *Technology and the Culture of Progress in Meiji Japan* (London: Routledge, 2007), 27-28, 32-39.

²⁵³ Chris Bongie, *Exotic Memories: Literature, Colonialism, and the Fin de Siècle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991), 4-5.

modernization of European society.”²⁵⁴ The modernising process that Japan began to embrace was perceived by the British as a threat to Japanese “traditional” culture, which was nothing but the Western representation of the static “Old” Japan. Conversely, the representation of “New” Japan, symbolised by its process of Westernisation, glorified the European and American models of society and further demonstrated how, by following Western principles, an Asian country too could successfully become “modern.” While these opposing images of Japan had already begun to emerge in the previous phase, from the 1870s they developed into an established dichotomy.

Victorian authors were well aware of this dualism, and how “Old” and “New” Japan affected each other. In 1871, following his residence in Japan for a period of three years, Algernon Mitford published *Tales of Old Japan* (1871), a collection of Japanese traditional novels translated into English to convey what he thought was the true essence of Japan, and at the same time, denouncing its inevitable disappearance,²⁵⁵ as he writes in the introduction to the first chapter:

The recent revolution in Japan has wrought changes social as well as political; [...] the old Japanese, such as he was and had been for centuries when we found him eleven short years ago, will have become extinct. It has appeared to me that no better means could be chosen of preserving a record of a curious and fast disappearing civilization, than the translation of some of the most interesting national legends and histories, together with other specimens of literature bearing upon the same subject.²⁵⁶

At another point in the book, the Victorian author also expresses some sort of sympathy for the Japanese dissidents who were fighting against the Westernisation of Japan, but, as underlined by Cortazzi, Mitford “did not hollow his romantic feeling to blind him to the gruesome nature of some of his ‘heroes’.”²⁵⁷ This conflictual emotional state is clear from the preface of *Tales of Old Japan*, when Mitford admits:

We may deplore and inveigh against the Yamato Damashi [sic.], or Spirit of Old Japan, which still breathes in the soul of the Samurai, but we cannot withhold our admiration from the self-sacrifices which men will still make for the love of their country.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 5.

²⁵⁵ Carmen Blacker, introduction to *Tales of Old Japan*, by Algernon Bertram Mitford (London: Folklore Society, Wordsworth Editions, 2000). See also, Sir Hugh Cortazzi, ed., *Mitford's Japan: Memories and Recollections, 1866-1906*, 2nd edition (London: Routledge).

²⁵⁶ Algernon B. Mitford, *Tales of Old Japan*, Vol. I (London: Macmillan, 1871), 2.

²⁵⁷ Sir Hugh Cortazzi, preface to *Mitford's Japan: Memories and Recollections, 1866-1906*, edited by Sir Hugh Cortazzi, 2nd edition (London: Routledge), x.

²⁵⁸ Mitford, *Tales of Old Japan*, vi-vii.

In contrast, other Victorian authors celebrated the rise of Japan as a new modern nation. In 1873, Samuel Mossman (fl.1850-1880) wrote *New Japan: The Land of the Rising Sun*, which provides a detailed chronology of the prominent events occurred in Japan from the end of the isolation in 1854 to the early 1870s.²⁵⁹ Taking into consideration how Japan dramatically changed in almost two decades, Mossman concludes:

At that time all was mystery, uncertainty, and error concerning these picturesque, fertile, thickly populated islands in Eastern Asia. The veil of obscurity has since been uplifted and we now see the rulers with the light of Western civilization in hand, dispelling in their ancient, oriental, inscrutable darkness. [...] Thus, in one short generation the Japanese have achieved a position in the civilized world that the foremost nations of Europe took centuries to accomplish; and now their national cry in the peaceful path of progress is “Forward! Onward! New Japan; the Land of the Rising Sun!”²⁶⁰

According to Mossom, the sacrifice of Japanese ancient traditions was a necessary step towards what he considers “modernity,” making Japan an exception in comparison with other “Oriental” countries.

Between 1872 and 1893, the dichotomy between the exotic “Old” Japan and the modern “New” Japan was simultaneously reinforced and naturalised in newspapers published in the North East, creating a contact zone in which both views of the country coexisted. The way newspaper reporting was organised helped local editors to address this potential conflict as the articles linked to each view were placed in two separate sections. News and reports about the Japanese modernisation and international trade were published in the early pages, in which political and economic topics concerning British and overseas affairs were pragmatically debated. Discussions of Japan-themed events, or comments regarding the popularity of Japanese decorative objects could be found in the cultural section of the newspaper, in which reference to the actuality was generally absent.²⁶¹

This organisation also contributed to affirming gendered connotations with Japan. News related to “New” Japan could be found in the political and economic section of the newspaper, which mostly addressed male readers; while Japanese cultural themes and decorative objects were mostly discussed in columns with a female readership in mind, as demonstrated by their titles,

²⁵⁹ With regard to Samuel Mossman, see, Donald Calman, *The Nature and Origins of Japanese Imperialism: A Re-interpretation of the 1873 Crisis* (London: Routledge, 1992) 12-13, 92; Sir Hugh Cortazzi, ed., *Victorians in Japan: In and around the Treaty Ports* (London: Athlone Press, 1987), 19, 162.

²⁶⁰ Samuel Mossman, *New Japan: The Land of the Rising Sun; Its Annals During the Past Twenty Years* (London: John Murray), 483-484.

²⁶¹ As discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis, advertisements of Japanese decorative objects represented an exception to this, as they were generally placed on the front page.

such as “Feminine Fashions and Fancies,”²⁶² “Girls Gossip,”²⁶³ or the “Ladies’ Column.”²⁶⁴ In so doing, the conflation was reduced, increasing the chances to defuse this potentially conflicting dichotomy.

“New” Japan

The modernising process undertaken by the Meiji government became a relevant topic of discussion in newspapers published in the North East concurrently with the Japanese diplomatic mission that travelled around the world in the early 1870s. Headed by Iwakura Tomomi (1825-1883), the mission left Yokohama in December 1871 and after travelling through the United States and Europe, it returned to Japan in September 1873. The main goals of the Iwakura mission were to gather information regarding the western countries’ industrial excellences, and revise the “unequal treaties.”²⁶⁵ Although the latter goal was unsuccessful, the former was partly achieved, considering the high industrial development reached by Japan in the decades following the diplomatic mission.²⁶⁶

As part of this world tour of Western capitals and industrial sites, on the 21st of October 1872, the Iwakura mission paid a visit to the North East of England, which at the time represented worldwide excellence in mining, iron and steel production, shipbuilding and heavy engineering.²⁶⁷ The Newcastle newspapers that reported the Japanese diplomatic visit focused on the daily movement of the group and the industries they visited.²⁶⁸ The articles also suggest that the welcoming of the locals was positive but was not as warm as the previous visit when the Japanese diplomats were followed by a huge and curious crowd during all their days in

²⁶² *Newcastle Courant*, 18 Jul 1879, 3.

²⁶³ *Shields Daily Gazette*, 6 Dec 1883, 4.

²⁶⁴ *Morpeth Herald*, 21 May 1887, 6.

²⁶⁵ See Ian Nish, ed., *The Iwakura Mission to America and Europe: A New Assessment* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1998); Olive Checkland, *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan, 1868-1912* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 109-118.

²⁶⁶ Janet Hunter and Shinya Sugiyama, “Anglo-Japanese Economic Relations in Historical Perspective, 1600-2000: Trade and Industry, Finance, Technology and Industrial Challenge,” *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000. Vol. IV*, edited by Janet Hunter and Shinya Sugiyama (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 1-109.

²⁶⁷ Norman McCord, *North-East England: The Region's Development 1760-1960* (London: Batsford, 1979), 41-42.

²⁶⁸ *Newcastle Journal*, 23 October 1872, 2; *Newcastle Journal*, 24 October 1872, 2; *Newcastle Journal*, 26 October 1872, 3.

Newcastle.²⁶⁹ This was probably due to a pivotal change in how the diplomats presented themselves through their clothes, as underlined by a local reporter:

The gentlemen were attired in ordinary morning costume and except for their complexion and the oriental cast of their features, they could scarcely be distinguished from their English companions.²⁷⁰

The altered appearance of the Japanese envoy was intended to portray an alternative image of Japan in the North East, consisting in a potential trade partner, rather than an exotic spectacle.

In accordance with the “New” Japan narrative, reporters in the North East of England interpreted the adoption of Western-style attire by the Japanese as a decision to abandon one of their ancient traditions in order to fully embrace the modernisation process. As stated in the *Newcastle Courant*:

After isolating itself almost entirely from foreign intercourse during so many centuries, [Japan] has suddenly thrown open its doors to all nations, and casting away its own ancient culture has begun to recivilise itself after the European fashion [...].²⁷¹

To the British, including observers in the North East of England, Japanese traditional menswear embodied exotic and feminine attributes, which were informed by racial and national discourses of the late nineteenth century. Aware of this, Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901) suggested in his late 1860s writings that to be perceived as “civilised” to Western powers, and treated equally in economic, cultural, and political arenas, Japanese had also to adopt European clothing in overseas diplomatic missions.²⁷² Following Fukuzawa’s advice, the envoy of the Iwakura mission wore mostly Western-style clothes when they visited the North East.

The Japanese decision to reinvent their public image in Europe and the United States adopting Western dress can be conceptualised emphasising its ambivalent and unresolved connotation. Homi Bhabha would identify the Japanese strategy as an example of “mimicry,” which occurs when members of a colonised society imitate the culture of the colonisers.²⁷³ For Bhabha,

²⁶⁹ In order to explain the lack of people presence at the train station at their arrival, the *Newcastle Journal* mentions the bad weather, *Newcastle Journal*, 22 October 1872, 4. Further information are given in the official report of the mission, in which Kume Kunitake (1839-1931), mentions the presence of a huge crowd in just two occasions: the first time in Newcastle when the group of diplomats were headed to the bank of the Tyne in order to get on a steamer; and the second when they were walking down the streets in Tynemouth. Kume Kunitake, *The Iwakura Embassy, 1871-73: A True Account of the Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary's Journey of Observation through the United States of America and Europe*, Vol. II, edited by Healey Graham and Tsuzuki Chushichi, translated by Healey Graham (Chiba: Japan Documents, 2002), 290, 305.

²⁷⁰ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 23 October 1872.

²⁷¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 25 October 1872, 8.

²⁷² Yukichi Fukuzawa, *Autobiography* (Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1960), 127; see also, Helene Hopper, *Fukuzawa Yukichi: From Samurai to Capitalist* (New York: Pearson, Longman, 2008).

²⁷³ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

mimicry should be ultimately seen as a “double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority.”²⁷⁴ In other words, this ambivalence simultaneously reinforced the imperial, dominant position making the colonised “Other” even more easy to be handle, as it openly reaffirmed Western “superiority;” although, it also put in doubt the essential “Self/Other” difference on which colonialism was based.

After the Iwakura mission, newspapers in the North East persisted with addressing this narrative associated with “New” Japan. With regard to the reaffirmation of the dominant “Western” discourse, public ceremonies organised in the North East and attended by Japanese officials served as the perfect stage. As early as 1874, Robert Thompson Jr., a shipbuilder in Sunderland, sold two cargo steamers named *Hyogo* and *Sumida* to the Japanese government via an English intermediary, Albert Richard Brown (1839-1913).²⁷⁵ The newspaper article which reported the launching ceremony of the *Sumida* focused its attention on the impeccable Western attire of both the Japanese Minister, Morimichi Motono (1836-1909),²⁷⁶ and the Japanese crew:

There is nothing in the dress of his Excellency to distinguish him from an English Gentleman [...]. It may be stated that the Japanese sailors are dressed in European fashion, and have, we believe, like the Ambassador, even forsaken the top-knot of their native country for an English-like head of hair.²⁷⁷

In a similar manner to Iwakura mission in 1872, the abandonment of their traditional costumes in favour of the “European fashion” became an implicit step by the Japanese toward the Western idea of modernity and civilisation in the eyes of the regional reporters, promoting the perception that Japanese successes were the results of a mere emulation of Western models.

Simultaneously, this new understanding of Japan forced newspapers in the North East of England to partly reconsider the position of the country on the world stage, deconstructing racial

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 126.

²⁷⁵ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 87. Brown, who had worked as a shipping agent for the Japanese government since 1869, was tasked with purchasing thirteen steamers for the Japanese navy, which were firstly employed for the Japanese punitive expedition to Taiwan in 1874 and later transferred to the shipping company named Yubin Kisen Mitsubishi Kaisha. Pernille Rudlin, *The History of Mitsubishi Corporation in London: 1915 to Present Day* (Hove: Psychology Press, 2000), 19. As suggested by Robert Eskildsen, even if colonial intent was denied in public, the Taiwan Expedition marked the first time the Japanese government attempted to emulate Western imperialism which for the Japanese was inextricably tied to the concept of modernity and civilisation. Robert Eskildsen, “Of Civilization and Savages: The Mimetic Imperialism of Japan's 1874 Expedition to Taiwan,” *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 2 (2002): 417-418. See also, Robert Eskildsen, *Transforming Empire in Japan and East Asia: The Taiwan Expedition and the Birth of Japanese Imperialism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019).

²⁷⁶ With regard to Morimichi Motono (1836-1909), see, Andrew Cobbing, *The Japanese Discovery of Victorian Britain: Early Travel Encounters in the Far West* (Richmond: Curzon, 1998), 93-94, 105.

²⁷⁷ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 5 February 1875, 3.

polarities and dichotomies between “civilised” West and “barbarian” East. Already in the early 1870s, the modernising process embraced by the Meiji government was perceived as so unique within the Asian context that it was rather compared with other European countries, positioning Japan “behind England, France and Germany, nearly on a level of Russia, Italy and Spain.”²⁷⁸ Furthermore, at the end of the decade, the success achieved by the Japanese in terms of economic and social reforms became a positive example of “modernisation” for other Asian countries. In an article with regard to Burma (now Myanmar), it was wished “that someday the nation may, like the Japanese, awake up and become a power in the world.”²⁷⁹ As a result, Japan began to be positioned in an unclearly defined space between “East” and “West.” By fluctuating between these two opposites, the popular image of the country deconstructed some of the stereotypes attributed to Middle Eastern and East Asian countries, such as their having static societies and pre-industrial economies.

In addition to Bhabha’s concept of mimicry, this ongoing cultural negotiation can be interpreted as a transcultural phenomenon which regional newspapers transformed into an everyday topic of discussion through their role of contact zone. As defined by Mary Louise Pratt, transculturation occurs when subordinated groups select the way to represent themselves using the language and materials transmitted by a dominant culture.²⁸⁰ Following the advice of Fukuzawa in the late 1860s, the abandonment of traditional dress in favour of Western-style attire during overseas diplomatic missions can be seen as a selective appropriation of European and North American fashions by the Japanese, who by so doing sought to be treated more equally on the economic stage. Especially in the North East, the international trade between the region and Japan forced local newspapers to address the global and local connotation of this transcultural phenomenon. On the one hand, by speaking for Japan and with a patronising tone about the social and economic reforms undertaken by the Meiji government, newspapers published in the North East reinforced the asymmetrical power relation that had so far characterised the cultural exchange between Japan and the Britain. On the other hand, the newspaper articles on the Japanese visits to the North East also recognised that, taking into account how quickly Japan was moving toward what the British public considered a “modern”

²⁷⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 25 October 1872, 8.

²⁷⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 24 January 1879, 6. In the following decade, a similar article was published with regard to the Kingdom of Siam (now Thailand), in which was noted, “[...] in some respects the Siamese might hope to emulate the civilisation of Japan.” *Newcastle Courant*, 22 July 1893, 2.

²⁸⁰ Mary Louise Pratt, “Arts of the Contact Zone,” *Profession* 15 (1991), 35.

society, the time at which Japan would be thought an equal was fast approaching. By sharing this ambivalence, regional newspapers put their readers in contact with the deconstructive nature of such transcultural phenomenon.

In the 1880s, the increase of international trade between the North East and Japan made even more relevant to local newspapers this new and complex understanding of the country and, to address this development, regional editors relied on the opinions of distinguished local industrialists. For example, a further acknowledgement that Japan was no more a pre-industrial country was given by William Armstrong on the occasion of the launch of a warship ordered by the Japanese navy from Elswick in 1885. From the early 1880s, the new shipyard in Elswick owned by Armstrong in collaboration with Charles Mitchell²⁸¹ began to receive orders from Japan for warships,²⁸² which in the following years made the country one of the most prominent clients of the company.²⁸³ On the 15th of March 1885, at the dinner organised to celebrate the launch of one of these warship, the *Naniwa*, Armstrong delivered a short speech in front of the Japanese officials and a couple of days later, his words appeared in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*. The industrial magnate firstly recognised that “the change that was taking place in Japan was something perfectly marvellous. It was, in fact, unique in the history of the world.”²⁸⁴

The newspaper articles also reported that Armstrong:

well recollected, when he was a boy, looking upon Japan as a strange mysterious state, inhabited by an unknown people who might as well be the inhabitants of another planet. In those days he little thought how much he should ultimately have to do with the Japanese. The result of his intercourse with them, and it had now been considerable, was that he had learned to regard them as one of the most interesting nations of the face of the world. He might say that there could be no higher proof of their advance in the arts and sciences and of their enterprise than their having ordered the two noble ships they had that day seen on the docks, and one of which they had seen launched.²⁸⁵

²⁸¹ Since 1867 Armstrong collaborated with Charles Mitchell, a Scottish shipbuilder who owned a shipyard in Low Walker, but when the two firms merged in 1883, Armstrong decided to open in 1884 a new shipyard in Elswick, which later became the one who handled the construction of warships for many foreign country such as Argentina, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Chile, China, India, Italy, Japan, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Turkey and the United States. See, Kenneth Warren, *Armstrong of Elswick: Growth in Engineering and Armaments to the Merger with Vickers* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989).

²⁸² The first was an unprotected cruiser purchased by the Japanese in 1883 and named *Tsukushi*. However, it was originally ordered by the Chilean navy three years before. *Shields Daily News*, 19 July 1883, 4. See also, Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 24.

²⁸³ “Japanese ships were the most numerous on the stocks or alongside, for in the same period a Chinese, a Chilean, a Brazilian and an Argentine navy also being built at Elswick, while the yard was never without a British ship in building.” A. R. Fairbairn, *History of Elswick* (Newcastle: Private Publishing, 1958). Quoted in Heald, *William Armstrong*, 206. See also, Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 21.

²⁸⁴ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 19 March 1885, 3.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

To emphasise how the perception of Japan as an exotic and inaccessible country was an outdated and childish understanding which no more represented the country in the mid-1880s, Armstrong associated this narrative to his younger age, even though the opening of Japan occurred when he was in his mid-forties. In addition, to testify the level of modernity reached by Japan, Armstrong chose as an example the fact that the Japanese Navy was ordering numerous warships. The same assertion was later echoed in *Newcastle Courant*, which considered the Japanese Government's decision to invest in a navy as a clear sign that "marked its progress in civilisation of the European pattern."²⁸⁶ Using two images such as the childhood and the coming of age for war served well to implicitly suggest that Japan was no more the pre-modern country of three decades before, whose male officials wore feminine clothes, but a military power worthy of respect due to its masculine desire of strengthening its navy.

"Old" Japan

Whereas the rapid development in transport from Europe and America to Japan made more accessible to a wider range of people visiting the East Asian country during their travels, in the 1870s the portion of Japan they had the chance to visit was limited to treaty ports because of the international agreements signed in the late-1850s. Accordingly, the interior of Japan continued to be perceived as inaccessible as before, maintaining its exotic and untouched fascination in contrast to Yokohama and the other few Japanese towns which were opened to foreigners. Therefore, in addition to questioning the understanding of Japan as a mere pre-industrial society, paradoxically, the process of Westernisation embraced by the Japanese simultaneously reinforced the preconceptions of Japan as the exotic and "remote" country.

As discussed by Yokoyama, in 1870s Britain this idealised image of Japan was largely promoted by two main groups of authors, namely short-term visitors and those who had never been in Japan, whose publications outnumbered the few books and journal articles with factual accuracy written by long-term residents such as Rutherford Alcock.²⁸⁷ On their return home, short-term visitors published accounts of their Japanese experiences integrating their impressions with information and curiosities taken from older publications, reinforcing the idealised image of Japan as a singular country, full of mystery and charm. Regarding authors who never had visited Japan, they had no chance but to rely on existing literature from which they extrapolated old clichés that were exaggerated in order to attract the readers' interest. In

²⁸⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 24 April 1885, 4.

²⁸⁷ Yokoyama, *Japan in the Victorian Mind*, 109-133.

so doing, most of the stereotypes concerning Japan coined in the 1850s kept reverberating in the following decades becoming familiar to a wider audience.

Newspapers in the North East played a relevant role in popularising this exclusively exotic understanding of Japanese culture, re-publishing in their cultural section extracts from books and journal articles mainly written by the aforementioned short-term visitors of Japan. The main source of material from which regional editors extracted such information was the corpus of travel writing regarding Japan that in the late nineteenth century comprised thousands of volumes and articles written by an heterogeneous group of authors, who were not exclusively short- or long-term visitors, but also foreign residents in Japan and even Japanese people writing in English.²⁸⁸ As suggested by Jenny Holt:

the Anglophone Japan corpus nonetheless offers a valuable perspective on how multicultural encounters were negotiated at a key time in the development of international relations, and offers vital insights into the ways in which such encounters took place.²⁸⁹

With regard to provincial newspapers, the analysis of the “multicultural encounters” discussed by Holt provides a further layer of complexity consisting in the active role of paper editors who selected the material to re-publish and, more importantly, the portion of the original text to re-print.

As anticipated, clear separation between the economic and cultural section in newspaper reporting provided the framework that reduced potential conflict between the representation of Japan as an awakening “modern” nation and the fairyland which stirred the exotic fascination among Victorians. To further accommodate this distinction, editors in the North East carefully selected the extracts to publish in their cultural section, favouring those with no prominent references to the modernising process undertaken by the Japanese government. An article that appeared in the *Newcastle Journal* on the 14th March 1873 entitled “A Japanese Lake”

²⁸⁸ According to the not exhaustive list compiled by Joseph Rogala, between 1850 and the 1920, over 1,000 books were published in English on Japan. Joseph Rogala, *A Collector's Guide to Books on Japan in English: A Select List of Over 2500 Titles* (Richmond: Japan Library, 2001). Rogala also lists over 300 texts written in English by native speakers of Japanese, such as the statesman Suematsu Kenchō (1855–1920) and the artist Markino Yoshio (1869–1956).

²⁸⁹ Jenny Holt, “Samurai and Gentlemen: The Anglophone Japan Corpus and New Avenues into Orientalism (Part I),” *Literature Compass* 11, no. 1 (2014): 38. Excluding well-known texts such as Isabella Bird’s *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* (1880) and the works of Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904), a few others have attracted interest and substantial in-depth analysis by literary scholars. *Ibid.*, 36–38. For an introduction to travel writing literature, see, Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

exemplifies this attitude. Extracted from a series of letters published in the *Times*,²⁹⁰ its original author was Thomas Cook (1808–1892), a travel agent and pioneer of organised tour holidays, who at that time was undertaking a trip around the world.²⁹¹ His impression of Japan was extremely positive, but characterised by clear limitations:

The sail over the inland sea of Japan surpassed all my dreams of the beauty of that island and mountain-studded lake, of 500 miles of panoramic scenery, with its charming bays of Hiogo [sic.] and Nagasaki, and the river port of Osaka, at all of which European and American vessels have free access.²⁹²

Cook was particularly impressed by a lake, and the travel agent was happy to admit:

I have seen almost every lake in England, Scotland, Ireland, Switzerland, and Italy, but this surpasses each of them, and combines the best features of them all in one. Such clusters of grotesquely-formed hills and mountains, and all so richly clad with brushwood, trees, and open carpets of the most brilliant verdure, encircling the windings of narrow passes, running into creeks and bays in seeming defiance of all geographical observations, that there is a perfect bewilderment of ever-changing but never-ending beauties!²⁹³

This description of the Japanese landscape perfectly embodied the mysterious fascination which was often attributed to the country.

However, proving a sole idealised and whimsical representation of Japan was not totally part of Cook's agenda but was mostly the result of the editor's choices. In the original letters published in the *Times*, Cook felt no conflict addressing both "New" and "Old" Japan offering a comprehensive account of his short experience of Japanese coastline and treaty ports in order to inspire British people to book a tour of the world through his travel agency.²⁹⁴ For example, in another letter published in the *Times*, Cook affirmed that:

All that has been told us recently of Japan is abundantly confirmed by observation and experience. The land is one of great beauty and rich fertility. The inhabitants and the Government are rapidly transforming into enlightened, peaceful, and cordial citizens. [...] The railway and the telegraph are teaching the people great lessons of social reform.²⁹⁵

Cook's positive impression about Japanese modernising processes was also echoed in the letter from which the *Newcastle Journal* editor extracted the article "A Japanese Lake," however, that part was not re-published in the regional newspaper. In the original letter, following the

²⁹⁰ "Round the World," *Times*, 12 March 1873, 4.

²⁹¹ For an introduction to Thomas Cook, which is considered the founders of modern tourism see, Piers Brendon, *Thomas Cook: 150 Years of Popular Tourism* (London: Secker & Warburg Ltd., 1991); Lynne Withey, *Grand Tours and Cook's Tours: A History of Leisure Travel, 1750 to 1915* (New York: William Morrow & Company, 1997).

²⁹² *Newcastle Journal*, 14 March 1873, 3.

²⁹³ *Ibid*, 3.

²⁹⁴ "Round the World," *Times*, January 23, 4; 5 February 1873, 4; 12 March, 4.

²⁹⁵ "Round the World," *Times*, 5 February 1873, 4.

discussion concerning the Japanese lake, Cook moved to talk about Shanghai, which was the next stop of his tour. In contrast to Japan, the travel agent was negatively surprised by the Chinese city, describing it in opposite terms in comparison with Yokohama and the other Japanese treaty ports. As he points out:

At Shanghai we hastily visited the old Chinese city, which presented a strange contrast to the cities which we had just left. Narrow, filthy, and offensive streets, choked and almost choking bazaars, pestering and festering beggars in every shape of hideous deformity; sights, sounds, and smells all combined to cut short our promenade of the “native city” [...].²⁹⁶

By cutting this part, the extract published in the *Newcastle Journal* not only preserved the general idyllic tone of the article, but also avoided a conflation with topics related to “New” Japan. This does not mean that the newspaper editor was afraid of addressing the Japanese modernising process, as in the same issue a short article entitled “Progress in Japan” was published, listing the numerous social reforms which the Japanese government completed in the early 1870s.²⁹⁷ On the contrary, this suggests that a formal and clear separation between “Old” and “New” Japan was more functional to British newspapers editors, rather than to first-hand observers and authors of travel writings. Consequently, this ambivalent representation of Japan, even within the same newspaper issue, further confirms the characteristic “open” form of such type of Victorian periodical, as discussed by Margaret Beetham.²⁹⁸ As a result, these multiple meanings provided in the *Newcastle Journal* ultimately allowed readers in the North East to cultivate their personal idea of Japan, privileging whichever interpretation they preferred according to their individual sensibility.

As anticipated in Mitford’s *Tales of Old Japan*, the process of Westernisation embraced by the Japanese was also perceived with anxieties by some British commentators, who viewed the steps toward modernisation and militarisation made by the Meiji government as a loss of cultural authenticity. Confirming what has been argued by Sarah Cheang – that modernity “produced exoticism by threatening to erase the exotic”²⁹⁹ –, newspapers in the North East

²⁹⁶ “Round the World,” *Times*, 12 March 1873, 4.

²⁹⁷ *Newcastle Journal*, 14 March 1873, 4

²⁹⁸ Margaret Beetham, “Open and Closed: The Periodical as a Publishing Genre,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 22, no. 3 (1989): 96-100.

²⁹⁹ Sarah Cheang, “Selling China: Class, Gender and Orientalism at the Department Store,” *Journal of Design History* 20, no. 1 (2007): 3.

addressed this popular perception in their cultural section publishing extracts from those travel accounts which focused on Japanese localities beyond open ports and touristic hubs.

This quest for a deeper layer of Japanese “authenticity” was fully embraced by Isabella Bird (1831-1904) in her *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan* (1880).³⁰⁰ Following the commercial success of her previous travel accounts such as *A Lady’s Life in the Rocky Mountains* (1872) and *The Hawaiian Archipelago* (1875),³⁰¹ Bird decided to visit Japan and, taking advantage of the new passport regulations passed in the 1875,³⁰² she received permission from the Japanese Foreign Ministry to travel also in the north of the country, where no Western tourists had had the chance to go prior to her. Her experience of both Japanese touristic hubs and treaty ports such as Tokyo and Yokohama, as well as “unbeaten tracks” such as the hinterland, northwards through the Tōhoku region and into the neighbouring island of Hokkaidō, allowed Bird to assert that she was able to see the “real” Japan:

I write the truth as I see it, and if my accounts conflict with those of tourists who write of the Tokaido and Nakasendo, of Lake Biwa and Hakone, it does not follow that either is inaccurate. But truly this is a new Japan to me, of which no books have given me any idea, and it is not a fairyland.³⁰³

As suggested by Laurence Williams and Steve Clark, her book reflects Bird’s ambivalent notion of Japanese cultural authenticity which was flexible enough to accommodate both the “space where the fantasy of uncontaminated Edo-period culture might still be found,” as well as the image of the country which was embracing a process of modernisation.³⁰⁴

The year after the publication of Bird’s *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan*, a long extract appeared in the cultural section of the *Newcastle Courant*. Rather than trying to capture the ambivalence and complexity of Bird’s travel narrative, the portion of text published in the local newspaper mainly reinforced the same nostalgic feelings toward the picturesque “Old” Japan discussed by Mitford. This attitude is exemplified by an anonymous journalist, who when introducing their article acknowledged the historical importance of the modernisation process embraced by the

³⁰⁰ See, Olive Checkland, *Isabella Bird ‘and a woman’s right to do what she can do well’: A New Biography of the Intrepid Traveller* (Aberdeen: Scottish Cultural Press, 1996).

³⁰¹ Isabella Bird, *The Hawaiian Archipelago: Six Months Among the Palm Groves, Coral Reefs, and Volcanoes of the Sandwich Islands* (London: John Murray, 1875); Isabella Bird, *A Lady’s Life in the Rocky Mountains* (London: John Murray, 1879).

³⁰² Andrew Elliott, “British Travel Writing and the Japanese Interior, 1854-1899,” *The British Abroad Since the Eighteenth Century, Volume 1: Travellers and Tourists*, edited by Martin Farr and Xavier Guégan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 202-204.

³⁰³ Isabella Bird, *Unbeaten Tracks in Japan: An Account of Travels in the Interior, including Visits to the Aborigines of Yezo and the Shrines of Nikko and Isé* (London, 1880), 95.

³⁰⁴ Laurence Williams and Steve Clark, “Isabella Bird, Victorian Globalism, and Unbeaten Tracks in Japan (1880),” *Studies in Travel Writing* 21:1 (2017), 7.

Meiji government, but also nostalgically commemorated this pivotal change in Japanese society: “nine [years have passed] since the magnificent and complicated system of Japanese feudalism was swept away.”³⁰⁵ After that, the passages extracted from Bird’s book are mainly focused on the Japanese interior through which the Victorian traveller discovered her authentic and “unbeaten” Japan. The rural landscape in which rice and wheat are cultivated with no technological help became a reassuring proof that European and American “modernity” had not yet completely contaminated the Japanese interior. As suggested by Andrew Elliott, this image of Japan as “a complete, static object for viewing, dehistoricised and precluded from self-directed change” was not alien to Bird’s narrative,³⁰⁶ however, the author of *Unbeaten Tracks* also stressed that her desire for an authentic, aesthetic experience of Japan was never completely fulfilled, whether because of blocked vistas, tangled forests, bad roads, bad weather, or socio-historical changes, which altogether reinforced her disillusionment and mitigated her idealised impressions.³⁰⁷ Whether intentional or not, the omission of this counterpoint in the extract published in the North-eastern newspaper almost erased the complex narrative developed by Isabella Bird. As a result, the representation of Japan in the extract kept its out-of-time characteristic which not only better fit the cultural section of newspapers, but also reinforced the popular, pre-modern stereotype of the country among readers in the North East.

Paradoxically, when from the mid-1880s and onward the economic relationship between the North East and Japan became quite established, local newspaper editors felt almost no conflict in publishing extracts which incorporated antimodernist sentiments. This attitude was perfectly exemplified by the work of Lafcadio Hearn (1850-1904),³⁰⁸ who, after his arrival in Japan in 1890, came to consider himself a mediator of the true essence of Japanese culture, which, according to him, “can, indeed, be understood only by one who has long resided in the interior.”³⁰⁹ In 1892, the *Newcastle Courant* published an extract from one of his early articles,

³⁰⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 7 January 1881, 6.

³⁰⁶ Elliott, “British Travel Writing and the Japanese Interior,” 207. For an introduction to the dehistoricised representation of Japan in Western historiography, see Stefan Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

³⁰⁷ Elliott, “British Travel Writing and the Japanese Interior,” 207-208.

³⁰⁸ For an introduction to Lafcadio Hearn, see, Donald Richie, *Lafcadio Hearn’s Japan: An Anthology of his Writings on the Country and its People* (Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1997). As discussed by Conte-Helm, Hearn “spent part of his youth at Ushaw, a Roman Catholic college in County Durham,” Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 61.

³⁰⁹ Lafcadio Hearn, *Glimpses of Unfamiliar Japan* (Tokyo and Rutland: Tuttle, 1894), xviii-xix.

in which Hearn argues that only in secluded Japanese gardens it is possible to have an authentic, aesthetic experience of Japan, thanks to:

antique garden walls [which] seem to shut out even the murmur of the city life. [...] Outside them hums the changed Japan of telegraphs and newspapers and steamships; within dwell the all-reposing peace of nature and the dreams of the sixteenth century.³¹⁰

This passage offers a chance to draw a parallel between travel writings and Victorian periodicals with regard to the accepted coexistence of contradictory representations of Japan. While for Hearn, “antique [...] walls” have the power to isolate the quiet idyllic garden from the noise of urban modernity; in newspapers, this metaphorical separation might be identified in the different sections in which the articles were positioned, confirming that at that time “New” and “Old” Japan were perceived as two completely separate entities which could coexist in the same issue as long as they were associated with different spheres, namely, the concreteness of international business and the romantic nostalgia for an imagined past.

Excluding the few newspaper articles that reported Japanese social and political changes – such as the revision of the penal code,³¹¹ or the promulgation of the Constitution,³¹² – the majority of contributions concerning Japanese society and culture further reinforced the idea of Japan as a dehistoricised “singular country.” Popular topics inherited from the 1860s, such as ritual suicide,³¹³ were quickly substituted with other kinds of picturesque and vernacular subjects. For example, dining seated on the floor was depicted as a peculiar habit of the Japanese,³¹⁴ as well as the consumption of *fugu*, a highly poisonous fish which the local government forbade to eat, but Japanese people persisted in doing anyway.³¹⁵ The tea ceremony was another topic of interest, due to its ritual aspect,³¹⁶ as well as *sumo*, which was also discussed in comparison with other wrestling disciplines, such as one practised in ancient times by the Greeks and the Romans.³¹⁷ Again, these accounts never mentioned aspects related to the Japanese process of

³¹⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 30 July 1892, 8.

³¹¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 2 February 1872, 8.

³¹² *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 13 February 1889, 3; *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 16 February 1889, 6.

³¹³ *Newcastle Courant*, 20 April 1877, 6.

³¹⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 30 March 1883, 6. The article was extracted from Frederick Whympster, *The Sea: Its Stirring Story of Adventure, Peril & Heroism*, Vol. 1 (London: Cassell, Petter & Galpin, 1877), 130-131.

³¹⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 25 January 1884, 6.

³¹⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 29 July 1893, 2. Entitled “An afternoon tea in Japan,” the article was an extracted from the *Ladies' Home Journal*. Written originally by Mary J. Holbrook Chappell (1852-1912), Methodist missionary in Japan from 1889 and wife of Rev Benjamin Chappell (1852-1925), the article attempts to describe the ritual of the tea ceremony in Japan, which was directly experienced by the Chappells.

³¹⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 6 August 1892, 5; *Newcastle Courant*, 29 April 1893, 2.

modernisation. They rather emphasised the out-of-time connotation of Japanese traditions and cultural expressions which originated in an indefinite past and were still practised, such as the Japanese custom of enjoying the cherry blossom,³¹⁸ or the *ikebana*, the art of flower arranging.³¹⁹

The only articles discussing socio-cultural topics which took under consideration the Japanese process of modernisation were devoted to the condition of the woman in Japanese society. The terms chosen to describe Japanese women emphasised their passiveness, for example, “modest timidity,” “childishness,” as well as elegance, grace and attractiveness.³²⁰ In the early 1890s, however, an article attempted to investigate in more depth the condition of the Japanese woman through the stages of her life, concluding that:

From babyhood to old age her existence is hedged about closely by the most rigid proprieties, and she must expect to be always under the control of one of the stronger sex. [...] Her position is little better than that of a slave.³²¹

The author adds that even if the new educational system established after the Meiji Restoration allowed women to acquire some basic knowledge in various subjects, these new skills were not advantages as the only real prospect for them remained marriage. Thus, even if the vertiginous development of Japan embraced both economic than social spheres, the role of women persisted to be extremely passive to the man. According to P. L. Pham, such images of Japanese women in British press and literature served as metonyms for traditional Japanese culture as “the (mis)treatment they received from Japanese men marked in many eyes the degree of Japanese social ‘development’,” which, despite its relative success, was still subordinated to Western “civilisation.”³²²

Considering that the Japanese woman operated as one of the metonyms for traditional Japan, it is no surprise that a feminine connotation was attributed to the consumption of Japanese objects, which were the other symbol of Japanese culture in the West. In this regard, newspapers in the

³¹⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 28 July 1882, 6. The original author of the article was William Gray Dixon (1854-1928) who resided in Japan from 1876 to 1880 working at the Imperial College of Engineering in Tokyo as Professor of English. See also, William Gray Dixon, *Land of the Morning* (Edinburgh, 1882); Checkland, *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan*, 161.

³¹⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 9 January 1885, 3. Extracted from Henry Faulds, *Nine Years in Nipon: Sketches of Japanese Life and Manners* (London: Alexander Gardner, 1885). Faulds (1843-1930) was a medical missionary and resided in Japan from 1874 to 1886.

³²⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 2 June 1882, 6; *Newcastle Courant*, 22 December 1882, 2.

³²¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 2 January 1892, 6.

³²² P. L. Pham, “On the Edge of the Orient: English Representations of Japan, circa 1895–1910,” *Japanese Studies* 19, no. 2 (1999): 174-175.

North East contributed to cementing this idea in the region, as well as to spread the popularity of Japanese fans, umbrellas, textiles, screens, and pottery. Excluding advertisements, which are analysed in the fourth chapter of this thesis, the feminine connotation associated with the consumption of Japanese goods is testified by titles of the newspaper columns in which Japanese decorative goods were discussed, namely, “Feminine Fashions and Fancies,”³²³ “Girls Gossip,”³²⁴ or the “Ladies’ Column.”³²⁵ Taking the *Newcastle Courant* as an example, “Feminine Fashions and Fancies” began to be published weekly from June 1878.³²⁶ The topics discussed consisted of reports of current trends from major European capitals, mainly London and Paris, and suggestions for keeping up with the latest fashions in dress and in interior decoration. In line with their popularity in the other parts of Britain, from 1879, Japanese objects started to be discussed with greater frequency. Fans, parasols, and textiles were especially praised for their potential multiple uses, not only for cooling oneself or guarding from the sun, but also for decorating the various rooms at home. For example, in September 1879, the author suggested using a Japanese parasol as a firescreen,³²⁷ and two years later, Japanese silk was mentioned as the perfect fabric for fashionable items such as opera cloaks,³²⁸ or comfortable house dresses such as gowns.³²⁹ In 1885, “Lady” also praised Japanese female hairstyles³³⁰ as well as how Japanese decorate their houses:

The modern fashion is to crowd rooms with an [...] cheap and useless “knick knacks,” which give the effect such a “melange” as one sees at the “London Crystal Palace Bazaar,” and at other and kindred permanent institutions of the kind. The Japanese, who are natural artists, never cumber their rooms with superfluous ornaments. A few, well chosen, and of the best available kind, are placed so that the best result may be obtained, and the effect of such economy is one of simple elegance.³³¹

It appears clear that for the author of the “Feminine Fashions, and Fancies,” Japanese culture became a synonym of refinement and good taste, and, to some extent, a new way to think about the modern interior design.

³²³ *Newcastle Courant*, 18 Jul 1879, 3.

³²⁴ *Shields Daily Gazette*, 6 Dec 1883, 4.

³²⁵ *Morpeth Herald*, 21 May 1887, 6.

³²⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 21 June 1878, 3. Initially the title was “Feminine fashions, fancies, and foibles,” which was shortened to “Feminine fashions and fancies” the following year. *Newcastle Courant*, 2 May 1879, 3.

³²⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 18 July 1879, 3.

³²⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 18 March 1881, 3.

³²⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 19 May 1882, 2.

³³⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 14 August 1885, 3; *Newcastle Courant*, 19 January 1889, 2; *Newcastle Courant*, 25 January 1890, 3.

³³¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 6 February 1885, 6.

“Old” and “New” Japan

Despite newspaper sections were instrumental to maintain a clear separation between “New” and “Old” Japan, an exception to this strict distinction demonstrates the impossibility to completely erase the occasional conflation between these two transcultural flows. The first occurred on the occasion of the public ceremony regarding the launch of the troopship *Sumida* in 1875, which was built in a Sunderland shipyard. As revealed by the local newspaper, within the *Sumida*, the windows of the saloon and berths were decorated by a local artist Mr Smith of Villiers Street with “Japanese subjects.”³³² The absence of photographs of these interiors does not allow for a detailed discussion, however, considering the most popular Japanese themes among British artists and decorators in the mid-1870s, it may be speculated that these “Japanese subjects” were probably inspired by Japanese art and designs found on imported ceramics, fans, textile, or woodblock prints. As discussed in the fourth chapter of this thesis, this type of Japanese visual and material culture was almost exclusively associated with the idealised and unchanging “Old” Japan, in opposition with the social, economic, and military reforms that the Meiji government was undertaking. Considering that in the mid-1870s the idea of Japan as a modern nation was still in its early phase, the brief discussion of Mr Smits’s work may be understood as an early exception rather than a way to subvert the predominant separation between “Old” and “New” Japan within Victorian periodicals.

1894-1913

As stated by William G. Beasley, “by the 1890s, Japan was militarily and economically strong enough to assert her independence, bringing the ‘unequal treaties’ to an end.”³³³ Following unsuccessful attempts in the 1880s due to the reticence of the British, in 1894 a new agreement was signed by Japan and the Britain, ending most of the previous clauses that had characterised the relationship between the Asian country and Western powers, such as the extraterritoriality, the inhibition to foreign people to access to the Japanese interior, and the unequal customs tariff to the detriment of Japan.³³⁴

³³² *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 5 February 1875, 3.

³³³ William Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan*, 140.

³³⁴ *Ibid.*, 143. Louis G. Perez identifies in Mutsu Munemitsu (1844-1897), Foreign Minister in the Itō Hirobumi cabinet, the key figure in the final revision of the treaties and “without [his] masterful and often ruthless management of the final crucial stages of the negotiation, another attempt would have ended again in failure, and Japan’s chances for a peaceful solution of the revision problem might have ended with it” Louis Perez, *Japan Comes of Age: Mutsu Munemitsu and the Revision of the Unequal Treaties* (Cranbury, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1999), 12.

Though there was ample opportunity to consider the potential impact that the revision of unequal treaties could have on the trade relationship between Japan and the North East, the local newspapers showed little interest in the matter. Signed in July 1894, the new treaty was first mentioned the following month in the *Northern Echo*, a newspaper printed in Darlington, only for discussing the end of the extraterritorial jurisdiction.³³⁵ In regard to the latter, the author of the article was confident that the act of giving up such privilege would only be in return for “certain advantages to be obtained for British interests.”³³⁶ The access to the Japanese interior beyond treaty ports was mentioned only once at the end of September in the *Shields Gazette*,³³⁷ while major Newcastle newspapers did not even report it.

The lack of interest in this matter was not limited to the North East. Hugh Cortazzi has revealed that also in the *Graphic* and *Illustrated London News*, two popular newspapers distributed all over the country, the signing of the new treaty between Britain and Japan was not mentioned at all.³³⁸ This might be explained by two main factors: firstly, as the ratification of the treaty would only occur in 1899, any sort of initial enthusiasm probably waned, knowing that there would be five years to wait; secondly, and more importantly, in the summer of 1894 Japanese decided to send troops to Korea, creating a diplomatic crisis with China, and it plausible that most of the journalists attention was focused on this situation, which later escalated in the Sino-Japanese War.³³⁹

The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War catalysed a new wave of interest in Japan all over Britain.³⁴⁰ Everything started when, in April 1894, numerous revolts erupted in Korea, motivated by anti-foreign feelings.³⁴¹ In order to quell the uprisings, the King of Korea called on China for help, which sent 2,700 troops and negotiated a truce with the rebels. Feeling

³³⁵ *Northern Echo*, 17 August 1894, 3.

³³⁶ *Northern Echo*, 17 August 1894, 3.

³³⁷ *Shields Daily News*, 19 September 1894, 2.

³³⁸ Sir Hugh Cortazzi, “Historical Perspectives,” *Japan and The Graphic: A Complete Record of Events, 1870-1899*, edited by Terry Bennett (London: Global Oriental, 2011), xv-xvi.

³³⁹ Ian Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires 1894-1907* (London: Athlone Press, 1966), 10-11.

³⁴⁰ For example, in a London newspaper such as the *Graphic* the number of articles related to Japan in 1895 increased by one hundred in comparison with the previous year. Terry Bennett, ed., *Japan and The Graphic: A Complete Record of Events, 1870-1899* (London: Global Oriental, 2011), v.

³⁴¹ Stewart Lone and Gavan McCormack, *Korea Since 1850* (London: Longman Cheshire, 1993), 226.

threatened by the Chinese participation in this Korean internal affair,³⁴² Japan decided to send 8,000 soldiers of their own, who took control of the Korean Royal Palace at the end of June, creating a state of tension with China that inevitably led to the formal declaration of war between the two East Asian countries in August. After a series of naval and field battles, the Treaty of Shimonoseki signed in April 1895 declared that the war ended in victory for the Japanese. However, it was a victory made bitter by the forced relinquishing of her claims to Port Arthur and the Liao Tung Peninsula due to Russian, French and German intervention.³⁴³ In contrast to the previous conflicts in which the Japanese were involved in the 1860s, such as bombing of Kagoshima and Shimonoseki by the British or the Boshin War, during the Sino-Japanese War British readers had the chance to receive news on almost daily basis which occasionally included illustrations. As underlined by Cortazzi, the Sino-Japanese War was “one of the first wars to be reported so graphically.”³⁴⁴ Photographs and drawings by war artists started to be reproduced in daily newspapers, revealing a totally different image of Japan to the one depicted in musical comedies such as *The Mikado*, or in Japan-themed charity bazaars, which were near contemporaries of these events.

The same phenomenon occurred in the North East, as local newspapers offered a detailed coverage of the Sino-Japanese War to their readers, highlighting the elements which linked the conflict directly to the region. Even before the starting of the war, articles constantly updated the people in the North East on the aggressive presence of Japanese soldiers in Korean soil, and the inevitability of a military conflict with China.³⁴⁵ Thanks to the use of telegraphic communication, the first naval battle, which occurred in July 1894, was reported just one day later in the *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*.³⁴⁶ Concerning illustrations, no photographs or sketches were reproduced on regional newspapers, but detailed maps started to appear, trying

³⁴² Japanese also claimed that the action undertaken by the Chinese government was contrary to the Tianjin Convention, an agreement signed by Qing dynasty of China and Empire of Japan in 1885 which made Korea a co-protectorate of both China and Japan. James McClain, *Japan, a Modern History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 297.

³⁴³ See, Beasley, *The Rise of Modern Japan*, 145-148; William Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 41-54; Sarah Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895: Perception, Power, and Primacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

³⁴⁴ Cortazzi, “Historical Perspectives,” xv. Furthermore, as discussed by Judith Fröhlich, “Japan won the war not only on a military level but also at the level of public discourse. Japan ultimately also prevailed in the ‘picture war’ of 1894-5. Through the pictures of the war against China, Japan managed to project itself as a truly civilized, modern nation.” Judith Fröhlich, “Pictures of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895,” *War in History* 21, no.2 (2014): 250.

³⁴⁵ *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 27 June 1894, 3.

³⁴⁶ The Battle of Pungdo. *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 25 July 1894, 3.

to satisfy the interest of the locals.³⁴⁷ Since the beginning, newspapers in the North East also attempted to predict to what extent this conflict might directly affect the region. For example, the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* suggested that, whatever the outcome:

The quarrel would be interesting from many points of view, and especially to this district. Much of the war material of China and Japan is of Tyneside manufacture.³⁴⁸

The “war material” was a set of warships, weapons and ammunitions ordered by the Japanese government in the North East, especially from Lord Armstrong’s shipyards and manufactories on the Tyne. On the Japanese side, two of the armoured cruisers built by Armstrong, *Naniwa* and *Yoshino*, took part in the Battle of Pungdo in July 1894, which sanctioned the start of the conflict between China and Japan.³⁴⁹ These and other details that linked the war to the North East contributed to stirring a deep interest among the local communities.

The discussion about the conflict was not limited to urban areas, and despite the aggressivity shown by the Japanese, newspapers in the North East expressed a prominent, but not unanimous sympathy for Japan. For example, in a provincial town such as Blyth, the local newspaper published a small piece of writing in which an anonymous author took a stand against China and its government, which he considered “execrable.”³⁵⁰ The *Sunderland Daily Echo*, instead, left their readers with the final judgement on which side to support, by providing two opposing opinions from two religious figures, namely, the Bishop of the Church of England in Korea, who after witnessing of the atrocities perpetuated by the Japanese army on the Korean soil, was surprised by the high consideration that Japan encountered in the Western public opinion;³⁵¹ and the Bishop of Exeter, who visited Japan one or two years before, and had only nice words about the Japanese.³⁵²

³⁴⁷ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 1 August 1894, 4; *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 26 November 1894, 4.

³⁴⁸ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 27 June 1894, 4.

³⁴⁹ During this naval battle, Tōgō Heihachirō, the captain of the *Naniwa*, sank the British transport ship *Kowshing*, which was carrying 1,200 Chinese troops. Piotr Olender, *Sino-Japanese Naval War 1894–1895* (Sandomierz: Stratus, 2014), 45. This particular event caused a diplomatic incident between Japan and Great Britain, as the company owner, Jardine, Matheson & Co., demanded compensation. However, it was recognized by British jurists that the Japanese attack was in conformity with international law of the time. Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War*, 133-134. The event was thoroughly covered in newspapers in the North East, especially because the warship involved was designed and built in Newcastle; see *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 7 August 1894, 5.

³⁵⁰ *Blyth News*, 23 October 1894, 4.

³⁵¹ “It is strange that Japan for so long and with such success have deluded European nations and Governments into believing that she is either a civilised power, or even desirous of becoming one, in the Western sense of the word.” *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 22 September 1894, 2.

³⁵² *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 22 September 1894, 2.

After the war, Japan did not reduce its sphere of interest in the North East. A resentment toward Russia encouraged the Japanese to expand their navy with four new battleships, twelve cruisers, and other, minor warships. Most of them were ordered from British shipyards, with Armstrong taking a substantial share of the orders.³⁵³ In parallel, the Japanese shipping company Nippon Yusen Kaisha decided to establish a new European line and chose Middlesbrough as their main loading port. This decision was influenced by the fact the European-Far Eastern Conference³⁵⁴ initially denied NYK the permission to load cargo in London for its eastbound journey.³⁵⁵ Middlesbrough was selected because its blast furnaces were among the main producers of iron goods in the world and was also the prominent Japanese supplier at that time, together with Glasgow.³⁵⁶ The European Line was inaugurated in March 1896 and by the end of the century NYK ships were calling twice per month in Middlesbrough.³⁵⁷ The passing of the Japanese vessels also motivated a second dock extension (1898-1904), which, according to John Robinson, the architect in charge of the work, was due to:

a large development of direct shipments from Middlesbrough to India, China, Japan, Australia, and South America, iron and steel forming a large proportion of the cargoes. [...] Among the largest streamers using the dock were those of the Japanese Line.”³⁵⁸

To testify the strong connection reached in Middlesbrough with Japan, the town was chosen to host an honorary Japanese consul at the very end of the century.³⁵⁹

While articles concerning the launch of new warships or steamships were published in local newspapers, the inauguration of the Nippon Yusen Kaisha European Line did not attract the same interest. The only exception was the *Shields Daily Gazette*, which reported the inauguration of the NYK European Line in March 1896, but erroneously mentioned London as the main port in Britain,³⁶⁰ a mistake corrected in the following article published two months

³⁵³ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 29; Heald, *William Armstrong*, 207.

³⁵⁴ As defined by Wray, the European-Far Eastern Conference was a “carter-like organisation of European shipping companies.” William D. Wray, *Mitsubishi and the N.Y.K., Business Strategy in the Japanese Shipping Industry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 311.

³⁵⁵ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 81; Wray, *Mitsubishi and the N.Y.K.*, 317-318.

³⁵⁶ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 83.

³⁵⁷ During the period between 1896 and 1902, 1,984 tons of cargo were handled, servicing also 29,777 passengers. *Ibid.*, 81-82.

³⁵⁸ John Robinson, *Recent Dock Extension Works at Middlesbrough, Read Before the East of Scotland Engineering Ass. at Edinburgh, 8th of February*. (Middlesbrough: 1906). This aspect was also confirmed when Joseph Whitwell Pease spoke at the Tees Conservancy Commission meeting, held at Stockton in February 1898. *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 8 February 1898, 4.

³⁵⁹ The first to be appointed was Waynman Dixon. Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 98-99, 110-111.

³⁶⁰ *Shields Daily Gazette*, 28 March 1896, 4.

later.³⁶¹ The only possible explanation for this lack of interest might be linked to the fact that Middlesbrough was among the main producers of iron and steel products in the world in the late nineteenth century, so Japan was only one of its many customers.

Beyond newspapers, Japanese investment in the North East after the Sino-Japanese War gave rise to occasional confluences between spheres respectively associated with “Old” and “New” Japan. For example, illustrated cards intended to celebrate the commercial friendship between Japan and the North East were produced by local designers on the occasion of public events such as the launch of the warships built in the region. Interestingly, rather than emphasising the modern image of Japan, these cards incorporate various elements commonly associated with Japanese aesthetic tradition such as a fan and a bamboo (Figure 4), a pine tree (Figure 5), or birds and flowers (Figure 6).

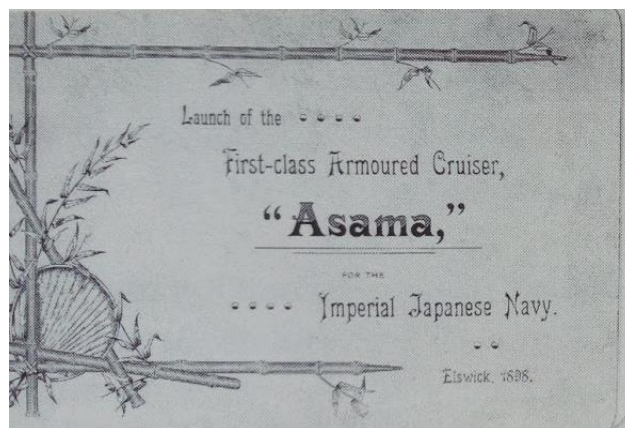


Figure 4 – Launch Card for the armoured cruiser Asama, 1898. Newcastle City Libraries, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

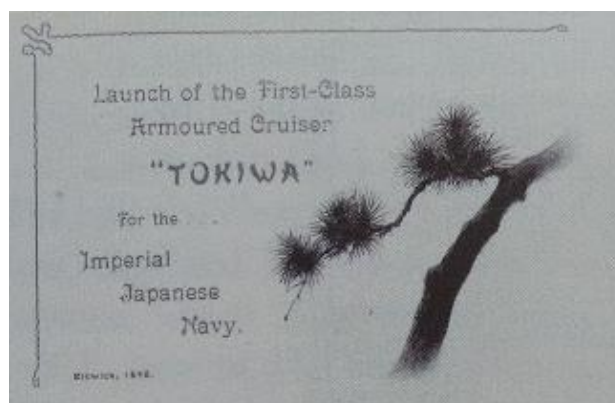


Figure 5 – Launch Card for the Armoured Cruiser Tokiwa, 1898. Tyne and Wear Archives, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

³⁶¹ *Shields Daily Gazette*, 29 May 1896, 3.

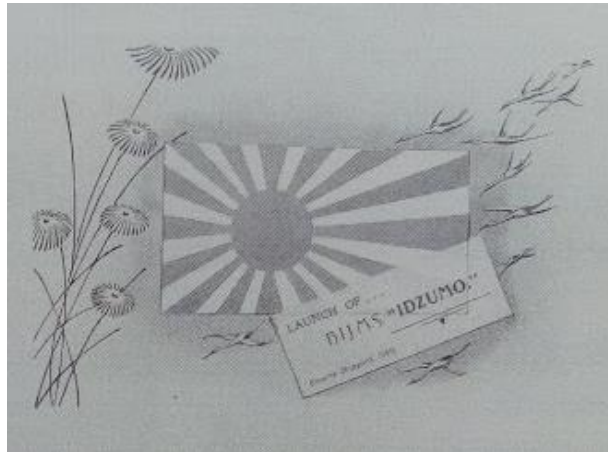


Figure 6 – Launch Card for the Armoured Cruiser, Idzumo, 1899. Tyne and Wear Archives, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

In addition to this visual reference to “Old” Japan, the asymmetrical composition characterising each card also demonstrates the attempt by the designer to incorporate some of the aesthetic principles that were commonly considered “Japanese.” In the early twentieth century, this complex transcultural dialogue further extended, introducing motifs in the Art Nouveau style, exemplified in the whiplash lines surrounding the horizontal festoon (Figure 7), or resembling sea waves (Figure 8). Considering that the development of Art Nouveau itself was deeply influenced by Japanese art, it might be suggested that designers in the North East not only diligently quoted Japanese themes, but also implicitly contributed to acknowledging the ongoing artistic dialogue between Japan and the West. Therefore, in addition to celebrating international trade between Japan and the North East, these illustrated cards also show that the clear separation between “Old” and “New” Japan promoted in regional newspapers was not always maintained with regard to the totality of visual and material culture in the region.

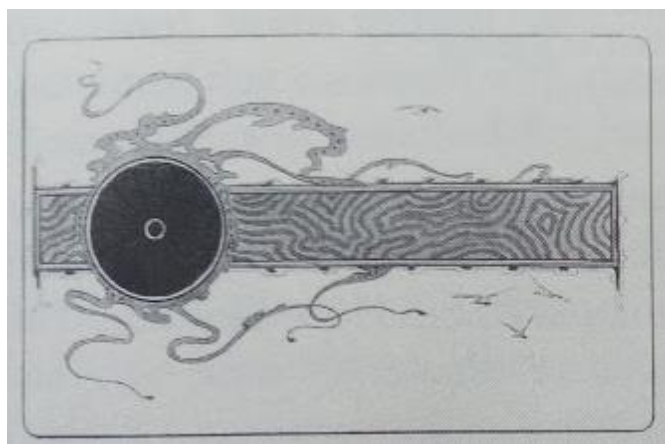


Figure 7 – Launch Card for the Armoured Cruiser Iwate, 1900. Tyne and Wear Archives, Newcastle Upon Tyne.



Figure 8 – Launch Card for the Armoured Cruiser Kashima, 1905. Tyne and Wear Archives, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

In general, the Japanese economic and military achievements further corroborated the idea of Japan as a civilised country worthy of official recognition by the British. As discussed by Ian Nish, from the 1870s the idea of an alliance was heard from time to time both in Britain and in Japan but the people who advanced such proposal had no power to make it real.³⁶² When Russian expansion in East Asia became a tangible threat to both Japan and the British Empire, the idea of a military alliance represented a mutual advantage for both countries, and in January 1902, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was finally signed.³⁶³ Beyond ending the British “Splendid Isolation,”³⁶⁴ this agreement also entitled Japan to sit at the same table of the other World powers.³⁶⁵

The announcement of the alliance in newspapers published in the North East further linked the idea of Japan to the local and everyday sphere, defusing part of Self/Other dualism. Two months after the entire text of the agreement appeared in the *Sunderland Daily Echo*,³⁶⁶ an upholsterer from Sunderland published an advert in which the military alliance between Japan and Britain was used as an example of the “peace and contentment” that should be sought within the domestic environment (Figure 9). As discussed later in this thesis, John Coates – the author of the advertisement – dealt in Japanese decorative objects, so it is not surprising that he decided to exploit the announcement of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance to promote his shop, in a similar

³⁶² Ian Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, 11-14. *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 19 May 1898, 4.

³⁶³ Ian Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, 99.

³⁶⁴ John Charmley, *Splendid Isolation? Britain and the Balance of Power 1874–1914* (London: Sceptre, 1999).

³⁶⁵ Ian Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, 1; see also, Phillips Payson O'Brien, ed., *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance, 1902-1922* (London: Routledge, 2004).

³⁶⁶ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 12 February 1902, 6.

manner to that which the tea dealer William Stewart did forty years earlier.³⁶⁷ Moreover, public events only vaguely related to Japan were labelled “Anglo-Japanese” in order to attract much more audience, such as a charity bazaar organised by a Methodist congregation in Whitley Bay in December 1902,³⁶⁸ or a sport competition entitled the “Great Anglo-Japanese Tournament,” in which two Japanese fighters performed, and Bartitsu, a martial art of self-defence developed in England but inspired to the Japanese *jujitsu*, was showcased.³⁶⁹

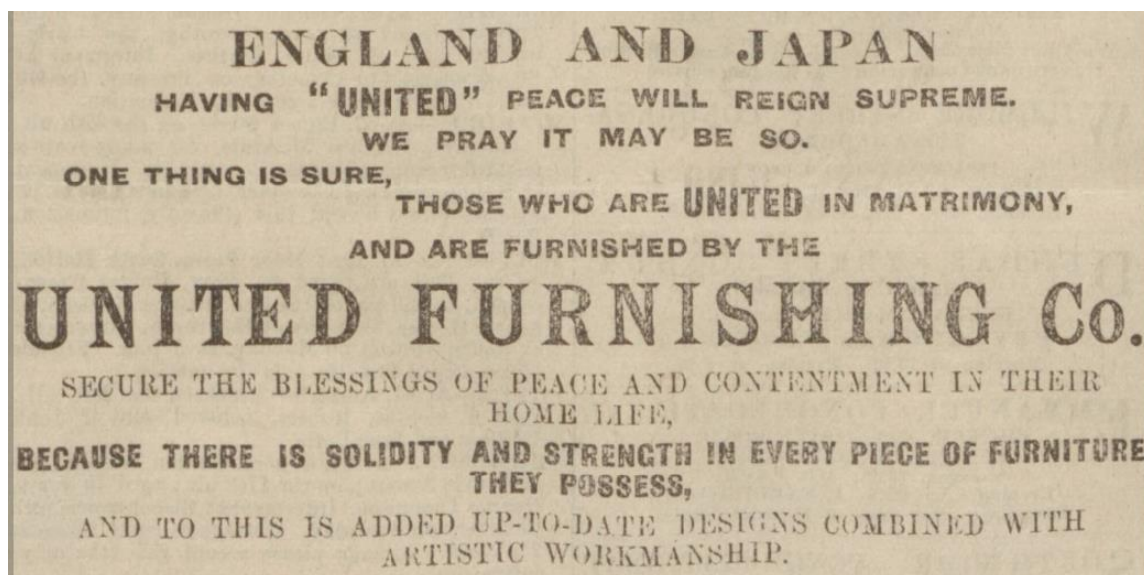


Figure 9 – John Coates, *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 1 March 1902, 1.

In a similar manner to the Sino-Japanese War, the military conflict between Japan and Russia had an extensive coverage in newspapers published in the North East.³⁷⁰ From the unsuccessful negotiations before the start of the war,³⁷¹ the global impact of this conflict was clear even reading the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, which republished extracts from other newspapers featuring reports from Hong Kong, Berlin, Brussels, Gibraltar and Port Said.³⁷²

Considering the signing of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, it is not surprising that most of the sympathies expressed in newspapers published in the North East of England were in favour of Japan and their people, whose military successes were occasionally associated with Britain. The

³⁶⁷ See note 208 in this chapter.

³⁶⁸ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 9 December 1902, 5.

³⁶⁹ *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 7 April 1902, 1. For an introduction to Bartitsu and *jujitsu* in Britain, see, Tony Wolf, *The Bartitsu Compendium: History and the Canonical Syllabus*, Vol. I (Lulu Publications, 2005).

³⁷⁰ For an introduction to the causes of the war as well as the aftermath, see, Ian Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (London: Routledge, 1985); and David Wells and Sandra Wilson, *The Russo-Japanese War in Cultural Perspective, 1904–05* (London: Macmillan, 1999).

³⁷¹ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 6 October 1903, 11.

³⁷² *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 1 January 1904, 4.

Durham County Advertiser published an article in which Japan was praised for the rapidity with which its population was assimilating “Western ideas,” concluding with eloquent terms such as “it will surprise no one to see the Land of the Rising Sun transformed into a Little England.”³⁷³ Moreover, the high-handed attitude expressed by the Russians in East-Asia was compared to Napoleon’s campaign in Europe, thus, implicitly, Japan was associated with Britain and the other European countries which stopped the French Emperor.³⁷⁴

While outnumbered by the positive ones, there were also a few negative comments with regard to Japan. The *Sunderland Daily Echo*, for example, republished a harsh critique extracted from the French paper, which at the beginning of the conflict asserted that Japanese were inefficient in handling their excellent ships.³⁷⁵ As suggested in an article on the *Shields Daily News*, the hostile attitude by the French was probably influenced by their interest in the East Asian country, as well as the alliance between France and Russia.³⁷⁶ In regard to Anglophone opinions, the only two negative remarks were expressed by a missionary in Manchuria and a newspaper correspondent, both of whom articulated their perplexities about the imperialistic attitude manifested by the Japan.³⁷⁷ However, they both admitted that their opinion was in contrast to the majority of people in Britain and the United States who were sympathetic towards the Japanese cause, and their chance to win the war.

Despite the prominent sympathy towards Japan, the debate about the unexpected aggressivity demonstrated by the Japanese during the conflicts against China and Russia did not go unnoticed in the North East. The *Shields Daily News*, for example, republished an extract from the *Graphic* which underlined such kind of disillusionment:

We could account for this strange proceeding if the Chinese had been the aggressor, but [...] it was the civilised Japanese, the most zealous sticklers [...] of Occidental etiquette [...]. The Torchbearer of Civilisation in the Far East [...] have, indeed, not acquitted themselves well in this Korean business.³⁷⁸

Ultimately, these self-assured and aggressive acts by the Japanese threatened the idealised image of Japan and their people, who were commonly depicted as passive individuals devoted

³⁷³ *Durham County Advertiser*, 1 April 1904, 7.

³⁷⁴ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 4 April 1904, 6.

³⁷⁵ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 10 March 1904.

³⁷⁶ *Shields Daily News*, 16 April 1904, 4.

³⁷⁷ *Berwickshire News and General Advertiser*, 22 March 1904, 5; *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 29 August 1904, 8.

³⁷⁸ *Shields Daily News*, 6 August 1894, 4.

to art and contemplating nature. This also led to a partial change in how the “Old” Japan was perceived: no more was it an exclusively static entity to admire and about which to fantasise, but also a country whose artistic traditions were affected by and developed with the passage of time. Accordingly, this moment of destabilisation provided the chance to reassess some of the tropes associated with Japanese traditional culture, such as Japanese womanhood and Japanese art.

The rise of an alternative symbol from the *geisha* to represent Japanese woman was gradual, as effectively exemplified by the narrative concerning the Empress Shōken (1849-1914). Born Masako Ichijō, she became engaged to Emperor Meiji in 1867,³⁷⁹ but rather than their marriage, various newspapers in the North East reported the festivities of their silver wedding anniversary in 1894.³⁸⁰ The *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, for example, published an informal letter from a correspondent in Japan describing the ceremony, attaching to the article an illustration of the Empress (Figure 10) sketched from one of the photographic portraits made by Uchida Kuichi (1844-1875) in 1872 (Figure 11).³⁸¹



Figure 10 – Empress Shōken. *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 2 June 1894, 11.

³⁷⁹ Donald Keene, *Emperor of Japan: Meiji And His World, 1852-1912* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 105-108. During her lifetime, Empress Shōken adopted the given name of Haruko.

³⁸⁰ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 26 February 1894, 3; *Jarrow Express*, 23 March 1894, 6.

³⁸¹ *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 2 June 1894, 11.



Figure 11 – Empress Consort, 1872. Uchida Kuichi (1844-1875). Photograph. Public Domain.

Despite Lena Thomas, the correspondent, states that she enclosed with the letter photographs of Empress Shōken wearing foreign clothes – as confirmed by contemporary *ukiyo-e* (Figure 12) –, the illustration published in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* represents the Empress in traditional Japanese attire. This decision was due to the columnist named “Geraldine,” who opted for keeping the photos for herself, offering in their place the sketch of the Empress’s portrait which she owned. As she candidly confessed:

The stamps mentioned by Lena shall find a place in my scrap book, and the photographs too. I have had a sketch taken of the Empress’s portrait, that you might see the style of dress the Majesty wore at her silver wedding.³⁸²

Geraldine intentionally misinformed her readers, erasing the fact that the Japanese Empress purposely appeared in a public with Western-style clothes. It might be speculated that the columnist thought that an illustration showing a traditional Japanese costume was able to better represent the content of the event, and attract the interest of the readers; however, in so doing,

³⁸² Ibid., 11.

she completely misinterpreted the purpose of the ceremony. As royal wedding anniversaries were not part of Japanese tradition, but inspired by foreign countries, wearing Western-style clothes was encoded with political and social messages such as presenting Japan as a modern state.³⁸³ As Sally Hastings has suggested, “the empress’ modern dress was consistently associated with the contributions of women to the economic and political life of the nation.”³⁸⁴ Regardless, Geraldine completely wiped out such further layer of meanings, persisting to link Japanese womanhood to traditional visual tropes.



Figure 12 – Illustration of the Silver Wedding Celebration, 1894. Utagawa Toshimasa (1866-1913). Color Woodblock Print.

After the Sino-Japanese War, various articles published in newspapers in the North East attempted to subvert this social construct, underlying the ways in which the status of the Japanese woman changed significantly around the turn of the century. In opposition to the geisha, Empress Shōken was chosen by some British journalists as a symbol of the Japanese “New Woman,” who could access higher education and play a relevant role in modern

³⁸³ “The wedding anniversaries of Japanese sovereigns had never before been a matter for public rejoicing, but when the emperor was informed that it was customary for royalty in foreign countries to celebrate ‘silver weddings,’ he gladly gave his consent to the proposed celebrations.” Keene, *Emperor of Japan*, 471. According to Michael Bourdaghs, the silver wedding ceremony “played a central role in propagating this new norm” of monogamous marriage. Michael Bourdaghs, *The Dawn that Never Comes: Shimazaki Tōson and Japanese Nationalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 87. With regard to the Emperor and Empress adoption of European dress as a symbol of the modern state, see, Sally Hastings, “The Empress’ New Clothes and Japanese Women, 1868–1912,” *The Historian* 1, no. 4 (1993): 680-682.

³⁸⁴ Hastings, “The Empress’ New Clothes and Japanese Women,” 678.

society.³⁸⁵ For example, in 1900 an extract from the *Windsor Magazine*, entitled “Girls in Japan,” was published in two regional newspapers, the *Newcastle Courant* and the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*. With regard to the Empress and education for girls, the extract states that:

The Empress is a keen educationist, [...] and she is particularly desirous of establishing a sound system of higher education for girls, whereby they may become mentally as efficiently equipped as their Western sisters; but her enthusiasm is not shared by the nation, and the girls seems far distant when the girls of Japan will be as intellectually vigorous as English girls.³⁸⁶

Two years later, another article reports that her ambitious dream was actually realised, especially because of the Empress’s effort “who has done more than everyone else for her sex in the land of the chrysanthemum. [...] She has entirely revolutionised the education of girls, [which led to] the opening of a University of women in Tokio [sic].”³⁸⁷ According to the author of the article, the Empress also introduced “European dress in place of the faultless costume of Japan,” mainly because “a Japanese lady is treated more respectfully by her husband when she is in European dress [...]”³⁸⁸ To testify to the emancipation reached by the wife of Emperor Meiji, in 1904 a short article reveals that the Empress “not only smokes, but uses a silver pipe with a stem ten inches long.”³⁸⁹ The author was mentioning a *kiseru*, the Japanese pipe traditionally used for smoking a small serving of tobacco,³⁹⁰ which was employed by both men and women in Meiji Japan, even if its popularity was declining in favour of the cigarettes imported by Western merchants.³⁹¹ Unaware of this, the author of the article projected some of

³⁸⁵ It is possible to trace the origin of this alternative and less paternalistic understanding of Japan and Japanese women in Victorian travel accounts written by female authors before 1894 such as Isabella Bird, however, the extracts published in newspapers in the North East did not address this discourse before the Sino-Japanese War. For an introduction, see, Lorraine Sterry, “Constructs of Meiji Japan: The Role of Writing by Victorian Women Travellers,” *Japanese Studies* 23, no.2 (2003): 167-183; Lorraine Sterry, *Victorian Women Travellers in Meiji Japan: Discovering a “New” Land* (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2009). In this regard, Laurence Williams suggests that in the corpus of travel literature written by Victorian women “the image of Japanese women [...] could make specific interventions into Victorian political debates concerning female education, divorce, property rights and prostitution, in ways that challenge characteristic assumptions of Western ‘freedom’ and Eastern ‘slavery’.” Laurence Williams, “‘Like the ladies of Europe’? Female Emancipation and the ‘Scale of Civilisation’ in Women’s Writing on Japan, 1840–1880,” *Studies in Travel Writing* 21, no.1 (2017), 19.

³⁸⁶ *Newcastle Courant*, 20 January 1900, 2; *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 22 February 1900, 7.

³⁸⁷ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 9 January 1902, 4.

³⁸⁸ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 9 January 1902, 4.

³⁸⁹ *Shields Daily Gazette*, 10 September 1904, 3.

³⁹⁰ For the origin of *kiseru*, see Masayuki Handa, “The Japanese Tobacco Culture in the Edo Period (1603-1867),” *Aziatische Kunst* 44, no. 3 (2014): 3-10.

³⁹¹ “Everybody in Japan smokes, both men and women. The universal pipe of the country is a small brass tube about six inches long, with the end turned up and widened to form the bowl. This bowl holds the merest pinch of tobacco; a couple of whiffs, a smart rap on the edge of the brazier to knock out the residue, and the pipe is filled again and again, until the smoker feels satisfied. The girls that wait on one at the yadoyas and tea-houses carry their tobacco in the capacious sleeve-pockets of their dress, and their pipes sometimes thrust in the sash or girdle, and sometimes stuck in the back of the hair.” Thomas Stevens, *Around the World on a Bicycle: From San Francisco to Yokohama*, Vol. II (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searles, and Rivington, 1887), 455.

the feminist ideals of the New Woman³⁹² – which included being at liberty to smoke³⁹³ – upon the Japanese Empress, with the intention to destabilise the stereotype of Japanese woman as passive and condescending.³⁹⁴ Even if this alternative vision of Japanese femininity did not supplant the geisha trope in the North East,³⁹⁵ it demonstrates how at the turn of the century one of the most well-established metonyms of “Old” Japan was put under scrutiny in provincial newspapers.

In a similar manner to Japanese womanhood, another Western symbol of traditional “Old” Japan started to be reassessed in early 1894, namely the appreciation and consumption of Japanese objects. The first attempt to reconsider more critically the British fascination with “everything Japanese” in newspapers appeared in the positive review of the book *The World’s Highway* written by Sara Dunn (née Armstrong). The author was the wife of a Northumbrian architect, Archibald Matthias Dunn (1832-1917), with whom she travelled in Europe, America and the East Asia.³⁹⁶ Appearing in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, the review affirms that the section of the book in which Japan is discussed contains “nothing of a Japanomaniack,” because the author “does not admire everything in Japan that is Japanese, and when anything strikes her that is trivial or shallow she says so.”³⁹⁷

The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War offered further motivations to reconsider the British representation and consumption of Japan. Originally published in the London newspaper *The*

³⁹² With regard to New Woman, see, Sally Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the Fin de Siècle* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1997). As demonstrated by Einav Rabinovitch-Fox, in the early twentieth century, some American feminists consciously adopted Japanese-style dresses such as loose-flowing gowns to manifest their reformist agenda. Einav Rabinovitch-Fox, “[Re]Fashioning the New Woman: Women’s Dress, the Oriental Style, and the Construction of American Feminist Imagery in the 1910s,” *Journal of Women’s History* 27, no. 2 (2015): 14-36.

³⁹³ Dolores Mitchell, “The ‘New Woman’ as Prometheus: Women Artists Depict Women Smoking,” *Woman’s Art Journal* 12, no. 1 (1991): 5-6.

³⁹⁴ In reality, the Empress’s agenda did not aim to subvert the gender power balance, as her reformist ideas were exclusively addressed to establish in the national discourse “the essential importance of women to the building of modern Japan.” Hastings, “The Empress’ New Clothes and Japanese Women,” 692; also because feminist movements in Japan began in earnest later in 1911. Kei Imai, “Japanese Feminism and British Influences: The Case of Yamakawa Kikue (1890–1980),” *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations 1600–2000. Vol. V* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 190.

³⁹⁴ For an introduction to (proto-) feminist and colonial attitudes see, Chandra Talpade Mohanty et al., *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991); and, in particular, Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses,” *boundary 2* 12, no. 3 (1984): 333-358.

³⁹⁵ As testified by the warm welcome received by musical comedies such as *The Geisha* (1896) and *The Mousme* (1911) in the North East. This topic is discussed in the next chapter of this thesis.

³⁹⁶ Michael Johnson, “Architectural Taste and Patronage in Newcastle upon Tyne, 1870-1914,” PhD Thesis, (Northumbria University, 2009), Appendix 15-16.

³⁹⁷ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 23 January 1894, 5.

Referee, George Robert Sims (1847-1922) under the pseudonym of Dagonet points specifically against the indiscriminate consumption of Japanese decorative objects such as umbrellas or fans, because, according to him, such practice prevents a deeper understanding of Japanese art and culture as a whole.³⁹⁸ As Sims adds, this deficiency was so widespread that “the real Japan [...] is a Japan only for the few.”³⁹⁹ In other words, the author critiqued the stereotyped and commodified vision of Japan and China, inviting Victorians to rethink their idea of East-Asian countries and their cultures. A similar message was delivered by Oscar Wilde a few years before,⁴⁰⁰ but the fact that Sims published it in a periodical whose readership was quite generic, made his message even more effective and relevant to a wider audience. Moreover, having been extracted and re-published three days later in a provincial newspaper such as the *Shields Daily Gazette*, it further demonstrates how quickly ideas circulated during the last decade of the nineteenth century, reaching in a short period of time regions such as the North East.

Conclusion

From the early moments of the Anglo-Japanese cultural relationship, the newspapers in the North East of England made accessible the most relevant information about Japan to local communities, shaping the manifold perceptions of the country in the North East. During this first phase (1850-1871), the previous idea of Japan as a remote and mysterious land began to be flanked by the euphoria linked to the opening of Japanese ports to the West following the American expedition in 1854. News and newspaper articles about Japan and its culture contributed to simultaneously promoting its exotic and idealised understanding, as well as underlining its aggressive and chaotic side, testified by the acts of violence performed in the Asian country both by the Japanese and the British. During the second phase (1872-1893), the new political stability of the Japanese government and its intention to undertake a modernising process allowed the embryonic dualism between the idealised and real perception of the Asian country to develop into the dichotomy “Old” and “New” Japan. Editors of newspapers in the North East responded to this potential conflict by addressing each transcultural discourse in separate sections of their periodicals. While the Japanese myth of progress, epitomised by the

³⁹⁸ *The Referee*, 23 September 1894, 7. This periodical was a Sunday newspaper which primarily covered sport news. Sims wrote a weekly column of miscellany named “Mustard and Cress,” which became so popular that a compilation of his works was later published as *The Dagonet Ballads* (1879) and *Ballads of Babylon* (1880), both reaching a great commercial success.

³⁹⁹ *Shields Daily Gazette*, 26 September 1894, 3.

⁴⁰⁰ In 1889, Oscar Wilde wrote that the popular image of Japan was “a pure invention.” Quoted and discussed in Xiaoyi Zhou, “Oscar Wilde’s Orientalism and Late Nineteenth-Century European Consumer Culture,” *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 28, no. 4 (1997): 53.

abandonment of traditional costumes from the early 1870s, was discussed in articles published close to national and international news about economic and political topics; the romantic and nostalgic idealisation of “Old” Japan found space in the cultural sections of newspapers in the North East. The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War (1894) questioned such strict polarity concerning the understanding of Japan during the third phase (1894-1913). Some of the attributes associated with the Asian country, such as the docility of their inhabitants, as well as some of the metonyms of Japanese traditional culture, such as Japanese womanhood, were put under scrutiny for the first time. Although it did not subvert the preconceptions which had been previously established, the debate about Japan hosted by newspapers in the North East provided a further layer of understanding of Japanese culture. This also facilitated the formation of an alternative, more contextualised and historicised representation of both contemporary Japan as a country and with regard to Japanese artistic traditions.

Using the “distant reading” approach has revealed that regional newspapers functioned not only as a filter of the national press but also as a contact zone between the local communities of the North East and Japan. Whereas during the period under examination the global image(s) of Japan went through numerous changes, newspapers in the North East were able to address them all, confining them in two separate spheres from the early 1870s. While the confusion due to the period of political instability through which Japan went in the 1860s inhibited a clear distinction between the idealised “Old” and the real “New” Japan, from the 1870s newspapers in the North East shaped this dichotomy by simultaneously glorifying the Japanese sacrifice of their traditional customs on the altar of progress, and denouncing the irremediable loss that modernisation entailed for Japanese pre-modern culture. Rather than shedding light on the paradox of this ambiguous representation of Japan, newspapers naturalised this ambivalence for their readers. As a result, the same readers and people in the North East probably felt no conflict experiencing examples of “Old” Japan in Japan-themed events, as well as observing Japanese officials and naval students visiting the region, which exemplified the level of modernity achieved by “New” Japan.

Chapter II: Public Events

Introduction

Newspaper articles and travel writings were not the only media through which transcultural flows from Japan reached Britain. On the contrary, the British fascination with the Asian country became a recurrent theme in various aspects of Victorian public life and leisure activities in the period under examination. Therefore, to provide a wider picture, the popularity of Japan must be viewed in relation to the ways in which late Victorians enjoyed making use of their leisure time. As suggested by sociologists and historians, the modern notion of leisure may be considered a product of the Industrial Revolution, as only from the nineteenth century it is possible to identify in various social strata a clear separation between the sphere of work and leisure.⁴⁰¹ In order to outline this dualism, Joffre Dumazedier terms that:

the positive functions of leisure can be summed up as follows. (1) It offers the individual a chance to shake off the fatigue of work [...] (2) Through entertainment [...] leisure opens up new worlds, both real and imaginary, in which the individual can escape from the daily boredom of performing a set of limited and routine tasks. (3) Finally, leisure makes it possible for the individual to [...] enter into a realm of self-transcendence where his creative powers are set free to oppose or to reinforce the dominant values of his civilization.⁴⁰²

According to this definition, it is clear that whatsoever leisure activity performed in Britain involving Japan incarnated (almost literally) the liberating and escapist character acknowledged by Dumazedier, as well as the “creative power” to subvert or strengthen the British dominant position. For middle-class Victorians, however, the freedom from work and daily boredom was not the only attraction. As argued by Bailey, “the mid-nineteenth-century Victorian middle class has been suspicious of the moral temptations of a beckoning leisure world, but had learned to assimilate it to their culture by devising suitably brisk and purposeful recreations.”⁴⁰³

To identify the ways in which people in the North East encountered Japan and Japanese material culture in the public environment, this chapter not only provides a detailed account of the prominent types of public events organised in the North East, but also highlights the “purpose” embodied within each Japan-themed leisure activity in addition to its liberating and escapist character. In contrast to the majority of studies concerning the transnational relation between Britain and Japan in the late Victorian period, this chapter not only takes into consideration art

⁴⁰¹ Joffre Dumazedier, *Sociology of Leisure* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1974); Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution c. 1780-c. 1880* (London: Croom Helm, 1980).

⁴⁰² Dumazedier, *Sociology of Leisure*. For an introduction of the concept of leisure in Britain and its historiography, see Peter Borsay, *A History of Leisure: The British Experience Since 1500* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

⁴⁰³ Peter Bailey, “Leisure, Culture and the Historian,” *Leisure Studies* 8, no. 2 (1989): 109-122.

and design, but also high and popular culture altogether in order to shed light on the multifaceted and ambiguous representation of Japan in the North East, as well as on the ways in which locals experienced Japanese culture through leisure activities. In other words, this chapter aims to address the following research question: *how did people encounter Japan and its material culture in the public environment?*

Drawing upon newspapers articles and archive material, it has been possible to investigate public lectures about Japan, exhibitions of Japanese art and decorative objects in cultural institutions and museums, acrobatic spectacles, and theatrical plays. This order loosely follows a progression from educational to entertaining events, starting from public lectures which were mainly delivered by individuals with direct experience in, or specialist knowledge of, Japanese history and culture in front of an interested audience. With regard to public exhibitions of Japanese objects, the genuine interest was inextricably tied to an exotic curiosity, which only in the early twentieth century was tempered by a more accurate and historicised knowledge of Japanese artistic traditions. This development never occurred in the case of Japan-themed spectacles, such as acrobatic performances or theatrical plays, which included very limited didactic values in addition to being a family-friendly entertainment.

Each of these leisure activities represented contact zones in which not only did North-Easterners have the chance to encounter Japanese visual and material culture in a familiar environment, but also where the influence of popular culture in the North East was temporarily suspended, as this region was able to experience similar transcultural phenomena enjoyed in other parts of Britain, Europe, and North America. In addition to the display of loan collections of Japanese objects and curiosities in the region, Japanese visual and material culture such as lantern slides, photographs, and Japanese specimens were often called upon to enhance public lectures held at cultural institutions throughout the North East. Likewise, the presence of Japanese traditional costumes, accessories, and in-style decorations was a fundamental element to attract a wide audience in most Japan-themed spectacles staged at local theatres. In addition, as they were often part of national or international tours undertaken by cultural mobilisers such as lecturers, curators, and actors, the popularity of these public events demonstrates the close link between the fascination with Japan experienced in the North East and in the rest of Britain, proving that even peripheral regions were part of such transcultural phenomena. These aspects of localism and global mobility were instrumental in allocating the cultural relationship between the North

East and Japan in an intermediate position able to put the local communities in contact with transcultural flows such as the “Old” and “New” Japan.

Public Lectures on Japan

In the last three decades, the study of Victorian public lectures has received increased interest, focusing mainly on those concerning scientific subjects. In contrast to previous scholarship that considered the Victorian phenomenon of the popularisation of science as a trivialization of knowledge passed down to a wider and less informed public, Roger Cooter and Stephen Pumfrey have argued that the audiences should not be exclusively seen as passive recipients of watered-down elite science, but as active agents with their own interests and agendas.⁴⁰⁴ In the following decade, Bernard Lightman expanded this consideration to include the cultural dissemination and reception of emergent scientific ideas.⁴⁰⁵ Among the main actors, Lightman investigated the crucial role played by professional popularisers, who “offered ‘sensational science’ to the British public.”⁴⁰⁶ Together with Aileen Fyfe, Lightman also suggested that in the second half of the nineteenth century “popular science” entered the marketplace in which “most of the audiences [...] saw their role as consumers, whether of books, lectures, zoological gardens, or galleries of practical science.”⁴⁰⁷ The same concepts might be extended to the popularisation of Japanese knowledge through public lectures which were generally associated with a “scientific/academic” view about the matter that responded to the thirst for information resulting from the pivotal changes in the Japanese international policy and economic progress, rather than to the British fascination with exotic Japan.

The corpus of newspapers published in the North East represents the main source of information about the numerous public lectures organised in the region, as such lectures were generally advertised in them. From newspaper accounts, it was possible to count 95 public lectures organised in the North East between 1852-1913 (Graph 3). Considering the most relevant historical events related to Japan and the number of lectures, it is possible to identify three main phases: from 1852 to 1863, from 1864 to 1894, and from 1894 to 1913. The first corresponds to the three pivotal events that shifted the consideration of Japan in Britain: the end of Japanese

⁴⁰⁴ Roger Cooter and Stephen Pumfrey, “Separate Spheres and Public Places: Reflections on the History of Science Popularization and Science in Popular Culture,” *History of Science* 32, no. 3 (1994): 237-267.

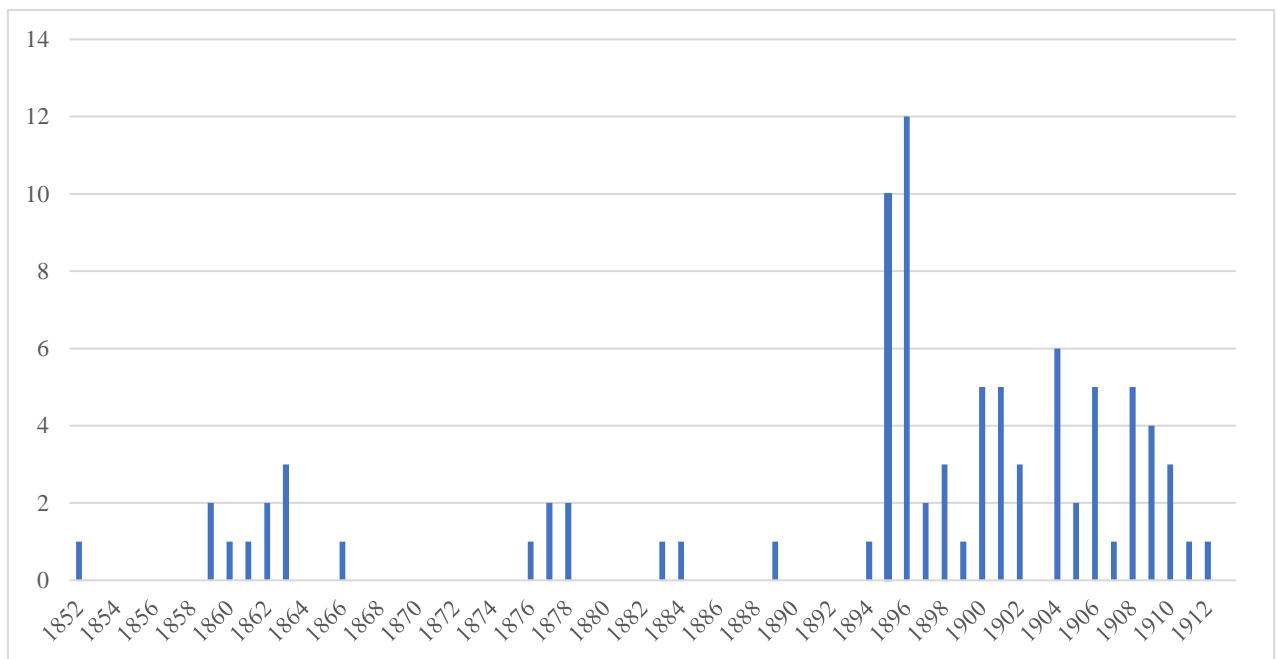
⁴⁰⁵ Bernard Lightman, *Victorian Popularizers of Science: Designing Nature for New Audiences*, (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2007).

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, viii.

⁴⁰⁷ Aileen Fyfe and Bernard Lightman, *Science in the Marketplace: Nineteenth-Century Sites and Experiences* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 4.

isolation and consequent opening of Japan to global trade; the presence of a Japanese court at the London International Exposition in 1862; and, in the same year, the visit of Japanese officials in Britain, stopping also in Newcastle. The second phase is a transitional period in which the general thirst for accurate information about Japan reached its lowest point. Lastly, as the Sino-Japanese (1894-1895) and the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905) forced the public to reassess their idea of Japan, the third phase illustrates that “experts” on Japan were requested in the North East to bring clarity to the situation.⁴⁰⁸

Graph 3 - Lectures about Japan per years, 1852-1913.



Source: British Newspaper Archive. See Appendix B.

Note: The series of lecture organised in the same venue were considered only once.

From the beginning, the common aspect that characterised the phenomenon of public lectures about Japan was the “global circulation of celebrity discourses,” a concept discussed by Joe Kember in his analysis of the Anglophone circuit for lantern lecturing.⁴⁰⁹ According to Kember, the global circulation of news concerning specific topics through regional press “enabled celebrity discourses to circulate quickly across continents, meaning that far-flung audiences might become familiar with big-name speakers long before they arrived in a region,”⁴¹⁰ as well as with the topic itself. The lecture delivered by Charles Downing in 1852 discussed in the

⁴⁰⁸ Almost four fifth of the public lectures (78%) were concentrated during the third phase.

⁴⁰⁹ Joe Kember, “Lantern mobilities,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 17, no. 3-4 (2019): 227-232.

⁴¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 297.

previous chapter, for example, was announced in advance in local newspapers⁴¹¹ and it was also anticipated by articles describing Japan and its political situation.⁴¹² In a similar manner, the success of the American mission in 1854 and the signing of the commercial treaty between Britain and Japan in 1858 stimulated a further interest in the topic also throughout the region, as the lectures organised in Stockton and Durham testified. The former was delivered by Barnett Blake, a lecturer of the Yorkshire Union of Mechanics' Institutes, who came to talk at the Stockton Mechanics' Institute on the 27th of October 1859 about general facts related to Japan, such as the presence of "Two Emperors" and the prominent local productions.⁴¹³ John G. Hargraves delivered the second at the Durham New Town Hall on the 25th of April 1860, and according to the reports of the event in the *Durham Chronicle* and the *Durham County Advertiser*, the themes touched on by Hargraves, a local scholar, echoed the opinion about the oppressive Japanese government, which did not permit "the magnificent development of the individual which constitutes the glory of our western civilization."⁴¹⁴ In line with the contemporary newspaper articles discussed in the previous chapter, the genuine curiosity in Japanese cultural peculiarities as well as the euphoria related to the "export of free trade" represented the two main topics which characterised these early public lectures about Japan.

While the aforementioned lectures were probably based on information gathered from contemporary publications, the opening of the Japanese ports to the West in 1859 enabled lecturers to display Japanese specimens which they personally collected in Japan or through intermediaries. The chance to see Japanese objects represented a strong attraction for Victorian audiences. For example, Dr. Daniel J. MacGowan (1815-1893), an American medical missionary who had a direct experience in Japan,⁴¹⁵ delivered a series of two lectures at the Music Hall (Nelson Street, Newcastle) on the 29th of November and 2nd of December 1861, in which he displayed his collection. In order to promote the event, a newspaper article stated:

⁴¹¹ For example, see *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury*, 18 December 1852, 1.

⁴¹² In addition to Morley's article discussed in the previous chapter, see also *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury*, 7 June 1851, 6; *North & South Shields Gazette and Northumberland and Durham Advertiser*, 28 June 1850, 7.

⁴¹³ Blake also described the Japanese as "intellectually [...] far superior to the Chinese, from whom some, though not the lecturer, believe they are descended." *Durham Chronicle*, 28 October 1859, 7.

⁴¹⁴ *Durham Chronicle*, 27 April 1860, 5.

⁴¹⁵ MacGowan spent most of his professional life in China, starting in 1848 as a medical missionary, becoming the American Vice-Consul in Ningbo in 1855, and dying in Shanghai in 1893. Throughout this period, he also travelled to Japan and other parts of the world such as Great Britain. See also, Martin Shough, *Redemption of the Damned, Vol. 1: Aerial Phenomena* (San Antonio: Anomalist Books), 267, n. 634.

The Doctor illustrate his lectures by numerous interesting objects brought from Japan, insomuch that, as the *Times* observe, the lecture table presents appearance of a Japanese museum.⁴¹⁶

According to the report of the first event published the following day, those “interesting objects” included:

[...] linen and paper fabrics variously coloured, paintings, bronzes, and a great variety of articles worn or used in Japan. [...] Several trays and other articles, beautifully coated with Japan varnish, and ornamented with the figure of a peacock in gold.⁴¹⁷

Despite the great opportunity to listen for the first time in Newcastle to a lecturer who visited Japan, the attendance was considered below expectation.⁴¹⁸ However, MacGowan came back to the North East a couple of months later when he delivered two more lectures (one about China and one about Japan) in Humshaugh, a small village close to Hexham. The article that mentioned those events reported:

Nearly the whole of the population of Humshaugh, of all ages, attended and filled the school room, [...] the walls of which were decorated with pictures, whilst the tables were covered with curious articles of Chinese and Japanese [sic] manufacture.⁴¹⁹

Thanks to MacGowan then, knowledge of Japan was not spread exclusively in urban centres such as Newcastle, Durham or Stockton, but also in a very rural area such as Humshaugh.

The tendency to offer a generic view about Japanese history and society was interrupted by Christopher Dresser, an industrial designer and one of the first popularisers of Japanese aesthetics in Britain, who delivered a lecture in the North East in which he described in detail the Japanese decorative style. Held at the end of 1863 at the Literary and Philosophical Society, Newcastle, and then at the Natural History Museum (previously known as Hancock Museum, and now the Great North Museum),⁴²⁰ Dresser’s talk was part of a series of four lectures designed with the ambition to illustrate “the true principles of taste in ornament.”⁴²¹ According to the numerous newspaper articles dedicated to these events, Dresser focused his attention on the Japanese decorative style only in the second lecture, when he also gave an account of Chinese design. In order to explain the characteristic motifs used in China and Japan, the lecturer used diagrams and exhibited specimens of products manufactured in both countries.

⁴¹⁶ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 29 November 1861, 2; see also *Newcastle Journal*, 29 November 1861, 2.

⁴¹⁷ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 30 November 1861, 3.

⁴¹⁸ *Newcastle Journal*, 30 November 1861, 4.

⁴¹⁹ *Newcastle Journal*, 1 April 1862, 4.

⁴²⁰ Dresser delivered the lectures at the Literary and Philosophical society on the 30th of November, and on the 2nd, 4th, and 7th of December 1863, *Newcastle Journal*, 20 November 1863, 1. While at the Natural History Museum (now Great North Museum: Hancock) on the 1st of December 1863, *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 26 November 1863, 2.

⁴²¹ *Newcastle Journal*, 1 December 1863, 2.

With regard to Japan, he showed “paper pocket handkerchiefs, some of the celebrated paper-leather, a small leather case, with a peculiar fastening, and a play-bill printed in native characters.”⁴²² Having visited the London 1862 Exposition, Dresser probably bought all the Japanese objects there.⁴²³ Comparing them with the collection exhibited by MacGowan, it appears clear that Dresser was mainly interested to display his Japanese articles as didactic aids, rather than to satisfy the exotic curiosity of the audience. As discussed by Jackson and Kramer, the career of the designer demonstrated that he was not against the idea of exploiting the British fascination with the stereotyped image of Japan,⁴²⁴ however, he probably felt that on this specific occasion, a rigorous, academic approach was more appropriate to a venue such as the Literary and Philosophical Society, which represented the intellectual centre of Newcastle at that time.

In a similar manner, in a lecture delivered in Alnwick by John H. Hunter, an assistant surgeon in the Royal Navy who sojourned in Japan, the speaker employed Japanese objects and other didactic tools with a prevalently informative purpose, gathering a large audience.⁴²⁵ Hunter was originally from Alnwick and gave a detailed speech about his experience in Japan on the 29th of December 1863.⁴²⁶ With the help of drawings and maps of Japan as well as Japanese dress and other specimens, the lecturer also discussed Richardson’s assassination and the consequent bombardment of Kagoshima that occurred just a few months before. By giving his account of such bloody events, Hunter offered not only an accurate picture of Japan during those trouble years to a provincial public, but also an alternative view on a country idealised due to the British fascination with Japanese culture.

The last lecture of the first phase, it is quite different from the other public talk discussed so far. In 1864, a lady with the nickname of “Astia” advertised a course on the “Art of Japanese Painting on Wood” (Figure 13). In the advertisement she compares the method with the marquetry, a technique where pieces of veneer are applied over a surface, creating decorative patterns. It seems highly probable that “Astia” was referring to the Japanese lacquerware.

⁴²² *Newcastle Journal*, 2 December 1863, 2.

⁴²³ Christopher Dresser, “The Art Manufactures of Japan from Personal Observation,” *Society of Arts Journal* (February 1878): 169.

⁴²⁴ Anna Jackson, “Imagining Japan: The Victorian Perception and Acquisition of Japanese Culture,” *Journal of Design History* 5, no. 4 (1992): 250; Elizabeth Kramer, “Master or Market? The Anglo-Japanese Textile Designs of Christopher Dresser in Context,” *The Journal of Design History* 19, no. 3 (2006): 199-200.

⁴²⁵ *Alnwick Mercury*, 1 January 1864, 4.

⁴²⁶ *Newcastle Journal*, 31 December 1863, 2-3.

Unfortunately, no other information is available, however, this advertisement demonstrates how fast the appreciation of the Japanese art and design had reached Newcastle following the dramatic increase of popularity of Japan after the London Exposition in 1862, which inspired various British architects and designers such as Edward William Godwin to employ Japanese traditional lacquerware techniques in his Anglo-Japanese furniture.⁴²⁷



Figure 13 - *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 29 March 1866, 2; 31 March 1866, 2.

During the 1870s, following the widespread fascination with the Land of Rising Sun and the growing desire to explore its unspoilt interior thanks to the new passport policy,⁴²⁸ Japan began to attract an increasing number of tourists. While some of the early visitors decided to write books, such as Isabella Bird, others opted to illustrate their experiences delivering public lectures at their return. Thomas Eustace Smith (1831–1903), Member of Parliament for Tynemouth and North Shields since 1868,⁴²⁹ was one of the latter. In his lecture in Cullercoats, a small fishing village on the coast and a colony for artists,⁴³⁰ Smith detailed his ninety-days trip around the world, providing a brief history of Japan.⁴³¹ Despite his passion for Aesthete painters such as Leighton and Burne-Jones, both feverish Japanophiles, the lecturer did not incorporate any elements related to Japanese art, but focused mainly on the Meiji Restoration. Although his lecture was riddled with historical inaccuracies, Smith attempted to make a distinction for his audience between the two main sides fighting to rule Japan, one loyal to the Shogun and the other to the Mikado. With regard to the rapid process of modernisation, Smith praised the Japanese government for taking Western powers as models, but he suggested that a

⁴²⁷ Godwin's work is discussed in Susan Weber Soros, *E.W. Godwin: Aesthetic Movement Architect and Designer* (London: Yale University Press, 1999); Susan Weber Soros, *The Secular Furniture of E.W. Godwin: With Catalogue Raisonné* (New York: Bard Graduate Center, 1999).

⁴²⁸ Andrew Elliott, "British Travel Writing and the Japanese Interior, 1854-1899," *The British Abroad Since the Eighteenth Century, Volume 1: Travellers and Tourists*, edited by Martin Farr and Xavier Guégan (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 202-204.

⁴²⁹ Regarding Thomas Eustace Smith and his art collection, see Timothy Wilcox, "The Aesthete Expunged: The Career and Collection of T. Eustace Smith, MP," *Journal of the History of Collections* 5, no. 1 (1993): 43-57.

⁴³⁰ With regard to Cullercoats as a colony of artists, see, Laura Newton and Abigail Booth Gerdts, *Cullercoats: A North-East Colony of Artists* (Bristol: Sansom & Co, 2003).

⁴³¹ *Shields Daily Gazette*, 12 October 1876, 3.

more patient approach would be safer and less risky. Overall, the lecture did not include any reference to picturesque experiences, demonstrating that in such kinds of public lectures the priority was to inform the audience on current Japanese affairs and politics, rather than providing a glimpse of “Old” Japan.

Two other groups of people who frequently returned from Japan and delivered public lectures were foreign employees in Meiji Japan, and missionaries. The former was a heterogenous group, which included engineers, architects, military officers, or university professors, who were hired by the Japanese government to assist and accelerate the modernising process in Japan by introducing foreign technology and expertise. Among these, R. W. Atkinson was employed by the Meiji government as Professor of Chemistry at the Imperial University of Tokyo from 1874 and 1881.⁴³² A native of Newcastle, Atkinson briefly returned to his home town in 1878, and on this occasion, spoke at the Literary and Philosophical Society about his impression of the progress in science made by the Japanese. According to the Professor “in a generation or two, we might find them rivalling the older nations of Europe in the number and importance of their scientific attainments.”⁴³³ As emphasised by Conte-Helm, Atkinson “provided yet another form of contact with the reality rather than the fleeting images of Japan that were so prevalent at the time.”⁴³⁴

Among the missionaries linked with the North East, Henry Baker Tristram, Canon of Durham, resided for a period in Japan with his daughter.⁴³⁵ Their impressions were later collected in a book entitled *Rambles in Japan* published in 1895.⁴³⁶ As underlined by Conte-Helm, Tristram identified various similarities between Japan and the North East which led him to conclude that if Japan embraced Christianity, it would become “the Britain of the Pacific.”⁴³⁷ Before writing his book, Tristram delivered a public lecture in 1878 and it is highly possible that he tried out on his audience most of the ideas that later ended up in *Rambles in Japan*.⁴³⁸ Moreover, the newspaper article that reports the event underlines that the account given “was of the most full

⁴³² Marie Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England: From 1862 to the Present Day* (London: Athlone, 1989), 58-59.

⁴³³ *Newcastle Courant*, 15 November 1878, 4.

⁴³⁴ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 54.

⁴³⁵ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 74. Among the other missionaries who delivered lecture about Japan in the North East: Rev. W. Denning in Blyth, *Blyth News*, 23 June 1877, 3; Miss K. Tristram in Durham, *Durham County Advertiser*, 30 March 1894, 5; *Northern Echo*, 30 March 1895, 4.

⁴³⁶ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 74.

⁴³⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴³⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 1 November 1878, 5.

and graphic description,” suggesting that Tristram might have incorporated visual aids such as photos, paintings or prints in his lecture.⁴³⁹

Despite the limited popularity of public lectures in the 1880s,⁴⁴⁰ the few lecturers invited to speak in the North East continued to present a scientific picture of Japan. For example, W. M. Angus delivered a lecture in Darlington entitled “The Physical Features of Japan,” focusing exclusively on the geography of the country, its climate, agriculture, and land ownership.⁴⁴¹ Following Canon Tristram, the Reverend J. M. Russell displayed his “magic lantern lecture” on Japan, showing slides resulted from “original photographs taken on the spot.”⁴⁴² The newspaper articles does not specify whether Rev. Russell, curate of Hexham, visited Japan as a missionary, however, it is clear that his main goal was to provide his audience with realistic view of the Asian country.

The thirst for accurate information about contemporary Japan rose again in 1894 because of the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, which demonstrated that Japan was not exclusively the fairyland depicted in novels and promoted through the consumption of Japanese decorative objects.⁴⁴³ On the contrary, as discussed in the previous chapter, the war demonstrated that Japanese people also possessed an aggressive attitude, as testified by the unexpected cruelties that they perpetuated during the conflict.⁴⁴⁴ The curiosity to know more about this warlike side of Japanese culture sparked the organisation of numerous public lectures about Japan in the North East between 1894 and 1896 (Graph 3), most of which featured visual aids such as lantern slides or photographs. In the North East, the first to address the topic was Reverend T. Lindsay, a native of Branton (a village west of Alnwick) who resided in Japan for seven years working as missionary. In December 1894, five months after the outbreak of the conflict between China

⁴³⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 1 November 1878, 5.

⁴⁴⁰ During this decade, only three lectures were organised in the region, the lowest number since the 1850s.

⁴⁴¹ *Northern Echo*, 19 February 1884, 4

⁴⁴² *Hexham Courant*, 26 October 1889, 5.

⁴⁴³ Toshio Yokoyama, *Japan in the Victorian Mind: A Study of Stereotyped Images of a Nation, 1850-80* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987).

⁴⁴⁴ As discussed by Saya Makito, the reportage of the Port Arthur (now Lüshunkou) massacre of November 1894, in which there were large numbers of Chinese casualties, became an international controversy. See, the second chapter in Saya Makito, *The Sino-Japanese War and the Birth of Japanese Nationalism* (Tokyo: I-House Press, 2011).

and Japan, Lindsay delivered a lecture in North Shields entitled “The Great Britain of the East,” which was promoted in local newspapers in relation to the war in East Asia (Figure 14).

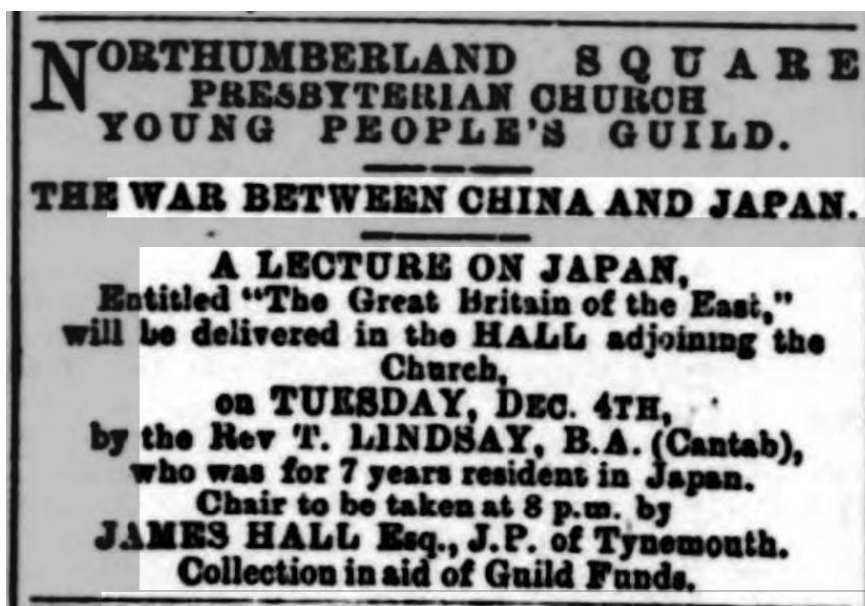


Figure 14 – *Shields Daily News*, 3 December 1894, 2.

The Sino-Japanese conflict was cited also in the series of lectures delivered by D. S. Brearley, a British wool merchant who had worked in Japan for fifteen years before he returned to his native country.⁴⁴⁵ Because of his familiarity with Japanese themes, Brearley was invited to speak in various towns of the North East in March 1895, including North Shields, Newcastle, West Hartlepool, Sunderland, and Middlesbrough. Employing more than a hundred slides taken from re-coloured black and white photographs,⁴⁴⁶ he attempted to provide a comprehensive account of contemporaneous Japanese society, giving space to the great changes that occurred in the previous decades.⁴⁴⁷ One of the slides was published in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, showing Brearley on a Japanese rickshaw (Figure 15), which was one of the most popular photographic souvenirs among Western tourists visiting Japan.⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴⁵ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 7 March 1895, 6.

⁴⁴⁶ Brearley’s photographs were probably purchased in Yokohama from the catalogue of the European and Japanese photographers based there. For an introduction to the Yokohama photographic industry, see Luke Gartlan, “Types or Costumes? Reframing Early Yokohama Photography,” *Visual Resources* 22, no. 3 (2006): 239–263.

⁴⁴⁷ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 14 March 1895, 3

⁴⁴⁸ The same illustration was re-published in the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* a few months later as visual reference to a short article entitled “A Japanese Carriage,” *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 18 May 1895, 9.



Figure 15 - *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 7 March 1895, 6.

According to Luke Gartlan, the theme should not be interpreted exclusively as part of the imperialistic narrative, because “the jinrikisha [Japanese rickshaw] and the camera, in their everyday presence, were nonetheless potent symbols of cultural innovation and modernity in Japan.”⁴⁴⁹ In contrast to the illustration of the Japanese Empress discussed in the previous chapter (Figure 10), which testified the deliberate substitution of a modern image of Japan in favour of a traditional, the jinrikisha theme acknowledged a cross-cultural exchange. With regard to the war, Brearley discussed the atrocities committed by the Japanese army in Port Arthur (now Lüshunkou), admitting that he found it hard to believe that Japanese people could act in that way, but “if they did, they must have momentarily lost their self-control, for neither as a nation nor as individual were they cruel.”⁴⁵⁰ According to another newspaper article, when Brearley returned to the North East to deliver another lecture a couple of months later, he “succeeded in obtaining many photographs of war scene & co. [which] will be exhibited for the first time.”⁴⁵¹ The fact that the lecturer invested further money and time in acquiring war photographs demonstrates the importance that visual references about the “real” Japan achieved

⁴⁴⁹ Luke Gartlan, “‘Bronzed and muscular bodies’: Jinrikishas, Tattooed Bodies and Yokohama Tourist Photography,” *Transculturation in British Art, 1770–1930*, edited by Julie Codell (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 107.

⁴⁵⁰ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 14 March 1895, 3

⁴⁵¹ *Shields Daily Gazette*, 18 October 1895, 1.

in the so-called “commercial popular lecturing systems,”⁴⁵² which, as discussed by Karen Eifler, “contributed to establish basic mechanisms of bonding audiences to visual media.”⁴⁵³ In contrast to the popular representation of Japan as an exotic fairyland, the photographs and lantern slides displayed by Brearley provided the opposite vision of the country, highlighting its militaristic and aggressive attitude.

The Japanese victory furthered the thirst for information regarding “New” Japan and other experts were invited to speak in 1896, making it the year in which the highest number of public lectures were organised. Two in particular received the warm welcome: Frederic Villiers (1852-1922), a British war artist, and Arthur Diosy (1856-1923), a scholar and founder of the Japan Society of London in 1891,⁴⁵⁴ both of whom commented on the atrocities committed by the Japanese in less negative tones in comparison with the previous lecturers. Newspapers in the North East report that Villiers (Figure 16) came to speak regarding his experience of the Sino-Japanese War in Newcastle and Stockton on Tees, respectively on the 16th of February and 20th of March 1896.⁴⁵⁵ According to the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, his lecture, entitled “Japan under Arms,” was so largely attended that “the vast auditorium [Tyne Theatre] was crowded in every part, hundreds being unable to obtain admission.”⁴⁵⁶ In his autobiographies, Villiers claimed that he was the only war artist that had the chance to reach the front line, a privilege from which other correspondents were barred, such as George Bigot (1860-1927).⁴⁵⁷ Considering this, it is no surprise that during his talks Villiers decided to use visual material such as lantern slides produced from the sketches and photographs that he took from the front line,⁴⁵⁸ however, it is not impossible that his illustrations published in periodicals such as *Black and White* were also displayed during his lectures as didactic aids (Figure 17).

⁴⁵² Joe Kember, “Lantern mobilities,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 17, no. 3-4 (2019): 229.

⁴⁵³ Karen Eifler, “Sensation – Intimacy – Interaction: Lantern Performances in Religious and Socio-Political Education,” *Early Popular Visual Culture* 17, no. 1 (2019): 45.

⁴⁵⁴ A cultural organisation established in 1891 which aims to encourage the study of every aspect related to Japan.

⁴⁵⁵ Frederic Villiers was sent out to account about the Sino-Japanese War representing various illustrated weekly periodicals published in England. Mitchel Roth, “Villiers, Frederic,” *Historical Dictionary of War Journalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997), 327–328. After the war, he delivered illustrated lectures all around Britain, including the North East.

⁴⁵⁶ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 17 February 1896, 8.

⁴⁵⁷ Pat Hodgson, *The War Illustrators* (New York: Macmillan, 1977), 142-143.

⁴⁵⁸ *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough*, 21 March 1896, 4.



Figure 16 – Frederic Villiers. *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 15 February 1896, 3.



Figure 17 – Taking the Key of Port Arthur, 1895. Frederick Villiers (1851–1922). Photomechanical Half-Tone Engraving, redrawn by Ernest Prater (1864–1950). *Black and White*, 19 January 1895, 72.

Being probably thankful for the great opportunity granted to him by the Japanese, Villiers expressed mainly positive opinions about them, underling “the military prowess of the Japs and the cowardice of the Chinese.”⁴⁵⁹ Even when he mentioned the Port Arthur massacre, his critical statements reported in newspaper articles appear slightly indulgent. While he affirmed that this violent act represented a “deep stain upon the Japanese reputation,” he counterbalanced his criticism by praising the “self-abnegation and bravery of the Japanese surgeons in attending to the wounded, both friend and foe.”⁴⁶⁰

Turning to Arthur Diosy (Figure 18), the scholar delivered a lecture entitled “Japan, with special reference to the recent war” in Tynemouth, Durham, South Shields, Newcastle, and Sunderland. The Chairman J. D. Milburn invited him to devote some words to the recent acquisition of North East steamers by the Japanese, and Diosy underlined that Japan “owned a great debt of gratitude to Tyneside for the excellence of the naval material of war with which Tyneside supplied her.”⁴⁶¹



Figure 18 – Arthur Diosy. *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 21 March 1896, 8.

⁴⁵⁹ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 17 February 1896, 8.

⁴⁶⁰ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 17 February 1896, 8.

⁴⁶¹ *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 21 March 1896, 8.

Although Milburn was probably referring to the commercial ships bought by the Japanese shipping companies such as the Nippon Yusen Kaisha,⁴⁶² it is interesting that Diosy took the occasion to reinforce the trade relationship that linked Japan with Elswick. He went on to discuss the “secret of Japan’s triumph” against China, as well as the reasons why Japan will probably face the brightest future in the next few decades. Diosy also condoned Japanese aggression, referring to it as a “mission to civilize China.”⁴⁶³ In his view, Japan had the right to pursue its imperialistic policy in East Asia under the flag of progress. It is clear that, in light of the Japanese victory, the empathy felt with Japan had spread among intellectuals, who attempted to convince wider audiences of their ideas through public lectures.

At the turn of the century, Japan’s militaristic actions was a topic that people in the North East were eager to hear more about and understand. For example, Diosy returned to the North East in 1902 to discuss his support for the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in his lecture “Japan and our Allies in the Far East,”⁴⁶⁴ and in 1904 to provide his opinion about the on-going Russo-Japanese War⁴⁶⁵ - as did Villiers.⁴⁶⁶ This restoked popular interest in Japan is further corroborated by a series of twelve lectures covering a wide range of topics related to Japanese history and culture simultaneously organised in Middlesbrough and Sunderland in 1910,⁴⁶⁷ delivered by Edward Ernest Foxwell (1851-1922), Professor of Economics at the Imperial University of Tokyo from 1896 to 1899.⁴⁶⁸ Throughout the lectures, Foxwell traced the historical events from the opening of Japanese ports in 1854 to the very contemporary anxieties around the “Yellow Peril,” about which he attempted to reassure his audience that “the yellow race [are] docile men, sensitive to reason,” but “it [is] possible that during the twentieth century a change might come in the attitude of West to the East [because] the yellow race, at least, would insist on being treated for political purposes as our equal.”⁴⁶⁹ While refuting the idea of Japan as a potential threat to the

⁴⁶² As reported in the newspaper article, Milburn affirmed: “Quite recently some gentlemen from Japan had been here ordering some very large steamers, with the intention of running regular lines of steamers to Australia, America, and England” *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 21 March 1896, 8.

⁴⁶³ *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 21 March 1896, 8.

⁴⁶⁴ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 21 March 1902, 3.

⁴⁶⁵ “Russian and Japan: the causes, the progress, and the possible outcomes of the present conflict,” *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 1 October 1904, 7.

⁴⁶⁶ *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 29 September 1905, 1.

⁴⁶⁷ *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough*, 5 September 1910, 2; *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 12 September 1910, 2.

⁴⁶⁸ John Archibald Venn, *Alumni Cantabrigienses: A Biographical List of All Known Students, Graduates and Holders of Office at the University of Cambridge, from the Earliest Times to 1900. Part II. Vol. II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1944), 559.

⁴⁶⁹ *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough*, 21 December 1910, 5.

British Empire, Foxwell's words also demonstrate that the racial discourse was still present. Anticipating the inevitable request by the Japanese to be treated as "equal," the lecturer included a warning that the rise of a country such as Japan would jeopardise the Western and "white" economic and political hegemony over the "yellow race" on the world stage.

As seen in the previous chapter, this change of perception with regard to Japan had also provoked a rethinking of other aspects of Japanese culture such as its art and design. For example, the most prominent lecturer invited to speak in the North East on this topic was Laurence Binyon (1869-1943), curator at the British Museum, who in 1908 delivered a lecture at the Literary and Philosophical Society in Newcastle about Japanese woodblock prints.⁴⁷⁰ As discussed by Michelle Huang, Laurence Binyon's expertise was greatly in debt to Kohitsu Ryōnin (1875-1933) from the Imperial Museum of Tokyo, who in 1902 provided assistance in cataloguing the British Museum's collections of Asian paintings and prints.⁴⁷¹ According to the newspaper article which reported the event in Newcastle, Binyon attempted to provide an historical background of this genre of Japanese art, starting from its origin at the end the seventeenth century.⁴⁷² In contrast to the dehistoricised and idealised vision of Japanese art promoted by the "Old-Japan" stereotype, Binyon sought to contextualise the stylistic developments of the Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.⁴⁷³ In addition, the lecturer demystified the aura of refinement associated with the materiality of such artistic objects, revealing that, while justly considered "the finest prints in the world," Japanese woodblock prints were "produced very cheaply."⁴⁷⁴ The impact of this lecture on the local community is difficult to measure, but considering that in the next five years two exhibitions of Japanese art were organised in regional museums, respectively at the Sunderland

⁴⁷⁰ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 29 September 1908, 7.

⁴⁷¹ In 1908, Binyon recognised Kohitsu as his "invaluable helper towards appreciation of the spirit and character of Japanese and Chinese art" Laurence Binyon, *Painting in the Far East* (London: Edward Arnold, 1908), ix. Cited in Michelle Ying Ling Huang, "The Influence of Japanese Expertise on the British Reception of Chinese Painting," *Beyond Boundaries: East and West Cross-Cultural Encounters*, edited by Michelle Ying Ling Huang (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), 94.

⁴⁷² Binyon was also a leading figure in the study of Chinese paintings. See, Michelle Ying Ling Huang, "Laurence Binyon: A Pioneering and Authoritative Curator of Chinese Painting in Early Twentieth-Century Britain," *Museum History Journal* 8, no. 1 (2015): 41-58.

⁴⁷³ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 29 September 1908, 7.

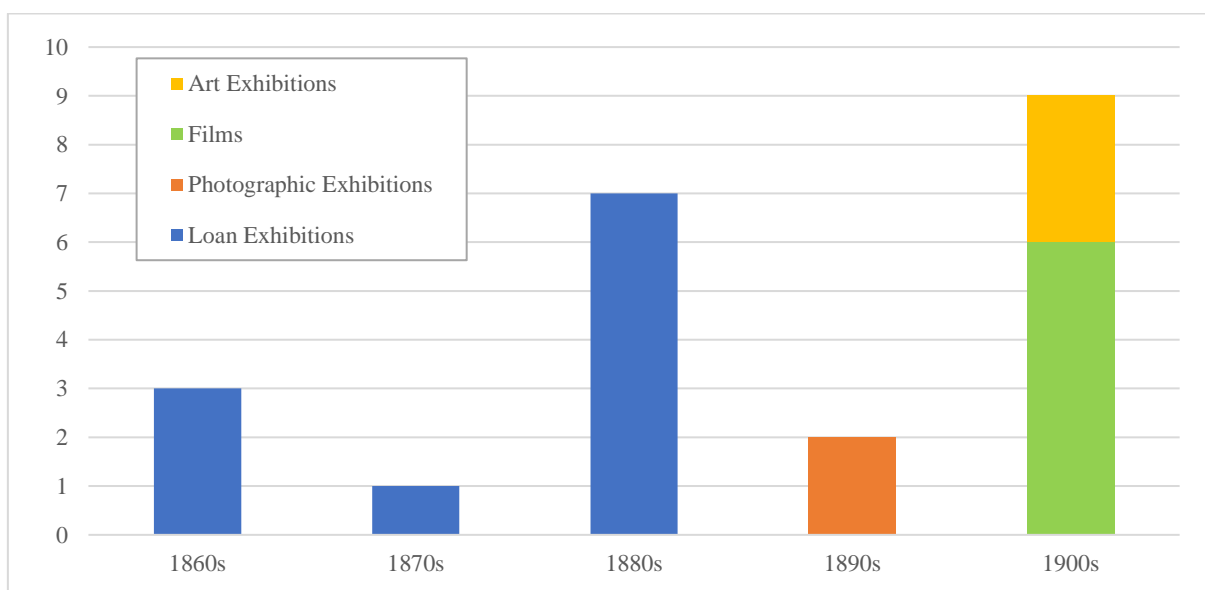
⁴⁷⁴ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 29 September 1908, 7.

Art Gallery in 1910 and the Laing Art Gallery in 1913,⁴⁷⁵ it might be suggested that in the early twentieth century also Japanese art was able to slip out from the monopoly of the static and dehistoricised “Old” Japan. Accordingly, the arrival of specialists such as Binyon served not only to encourage a more accurate identification and appreciation of Japanese artistic objects but also to understand their materiality through their characteristic production methods.

Exhibitions and Museums

As demonstrated through the discussion of the public lectures delivered in the North East of England during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, displaying Japanese artistic and decorative objects was simultaneously perceived as a useful didactic aid to the lecturer and an effective way to attract a wide audience. However, Japanese ceramics, prints, drawings, lacquerware, photographs, and natural history collections were not exclusively exhibited on such occasions. On the contrary, the aforementioned specimens of Japanese visual and material culture were displayed in other kinds of public events, contributing to promoting different images of Japan depending on the social environment in which they were organised, whether cultural and religious institutions, music halls, proto-cinemas, or museums.

Graph 4 - Exhibitions of Japanese Artefacts in the North East of England, 1863-1913.



Source: British Newspaper Archive. See Appendix C.

⁴⁷⁵ The exhibition in Sunderland was curated by Edward Ernest Foxwell in tandem with the 12-lecture course he was delivering in town, and it consisted in the display of 69 Hiroshige prints, reported in the *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 29 November 1910, 6. This and the exhibition at the Laing Art Gallery, curated by Charles Bernard Stevenson, are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

Conversely to public lectures – in which Japanese objects served to provide a limited but realistic glimpse of the country, its history or people –, in most of the other public events organised in the period under examination, the main tendency was to represent Japan as an exotic spectacle with just a few exceptions in the 1910s. Especially from the early 1860s to the last decade of the nineteenth century, the majority of Japanese objects were displayed without a proper contextualisation in loan exhibitions,⁴⁷⁶ with a peak in the 1880s (Graph 4).

Taking place in mechanics' institutes and other cultural organisations throughout the North East of England, the purpose of these events was generally to raise funds for their respective institutions, serving also as an occasion of social gathering for the respective local community.⁴⁷⁷ The display was often a kaleidoscopic arrangement of specimens lent by local collectors, where “Japanese curiosities” were placed next to oil paintings, geological fossils, and articles from other foreign countries, with limited effort to provide any sort of geographical identification, or didactic approach.⁴⁷⁸ In 1874, for example, an exhibition was organised in Alnwick, and Japanese, Indian, African and Chinese “curiosities” were displayed in the same section together, close to paintings by Edwin Henry Landseer (1802–1873) and natural history collections.⁴⁷⁹ This eclectic scheme was repeated in the following decade, both in Alnwick in 1882⁴⁸⁰ and in other towns such as Redcar⁴⁸¹ and Blyth in 1884,⁴⁸² Morpeth in 1888,⁴⁸³ and Newcastle in 1889.⁴⁸⁴ As a result, the presence of Japanese material culture functioned exclusively as an attraction that introduced the audience to the arts of the land, but without contextualisation, allowing them to imagine whatever they wanted Japan to be. Japanese objects were just one of the many exotic curiosities which played their parts in the spectacle arranged for the same local community who lent them.

In addition to reducing Japan to a “curiosity,” the only details provided in the newspaper articles regarding these events were the names of the lenders, to whom being associated with Japanese

⁴⁷⁶ Sometimes referred to as “conversazione.”

⁴⁷⁷ In Newcastle, *Newcastle Courant*, 22 December 1865, 2; Alnwick, *Newcastle Journal*, 4 November 1869, 3; *Alnwick Mercury*, 6 November 1869, 4; and Jarrow, *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury*, 2 October 1869, 5.

⁴⁷⁸ *Newcastle Journal*, 4 November 1869, 3

⁴⁷⁹ *Alnwick Mercury*, 31 October 1874, 1.

⁴⁸⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 24 November 1882, 2

⁴⁸¹ *Northern Echo*, 9 February 1884, 4.

⁴⁸² *Morpeth Herald*, 7 June 1884, 2;

⁴⁸³ *Morpeth Herald*, 26 May 1888, 3.

⁴⁸⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 14 September 1889, 4.

objects represented a sign of distinction among their peers. With regard to an exhibition organised in Alnwick in 1869, for example, a “Dr Hunter” lent Japanese weapons, books, drawings, inlaid works and a vase. Although no further information is provided, it is reasonable to suggest that the lender was John H. Hunter, the assistant surgeon from Alnwick who delivered a public lecture in his hometown in 1863 after a sojourn in Japan. Supposing that the same Japanese objects he displayed in 1863 were later exhibited in 1869, the total lack of contextualisation in the latter equalised the emphasis on the collection to the figure of the lender. In contrast to his public lecture, in which Japanese specimens were discussed and served a didactic function, the collection displayed in 1869 functioned exclusively as Hunter’s marker of distinction from his peers. This further layer encoded in the public showcasing of personal Japanese objects may be read as a sign of what Pierre Bourdieu has called “cultural capital.” By extending Marx’s idea of “capital” beyond the economic and into the more symbolic realm of culture, Bourdieu theorises a strong link between the cultural background of an individual and, similarly to economic capital, the power he might exert in social life.⁴⁸⁵ Furthermore, in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, the French scholar directly connects the distribution of cultural capital among educated people to the formation of a taste towards fine arts.⁴⁸⁶ As discussed later in the fifth chapter of this thesis, the possession of Japanese decorative objects among a wide variety of social groups, including the upper and middle classes, testifies that in Victorian times owning Japanese articles were also read as a sign of “distinction” which demonstrated the acquisition of some of the cultural capital mentioned by Bourdieu: more specifically, the sign of possessing an eclectic and cosmopolitan taste at home. Lending Japanese curiosities to display at public events represented an attempt to achieve this social “distinction,” which was pursued by extending the private sphere in the public arena. In addition, the specific case of Hunter also exemplifies that the connotation attributed to the same Japanese objects varied depending on the context, demonstrating that even if the dichotomy between “Old” and “New” Japan was beginning to be institutionalised, this phenomenon did not preclude the possibility that someone could be part of both polarities in accord with the type of environment in which specimens of Japanese visual and material culture were exhibited.

⁴⁸⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John Richardson (Westport: Greenwood, 1986), 243-248.

⁴⁸⁶ Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, translated by Richard Nice (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1984).

The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894 represented a significant turning point also with regard to the ways in which Japan was represented in public exhibitions. In contrast with the absolute predominance of the exotic and idealised understanding of Japanese culture stuck in an indefinite past, an alternative and more nuanced image of Japan began to be provided through the visual medium of photography. In September 1894, just two months into the Sino-Chinese War, Lindon Travers advertised in the *Sunderland Daily Echo* his Sunday recitals at the Victoria Hall, in which the headline of the event was an exhibition of photos entitled “War in the Far East: scenes in Corea [sic] and Japan.”⁴⁸⁷ The following year in Throston, now part of Hartlepool, a similar public event was organised but the exhibition of pictures was not focused on the Sino-Japanese War, but on Japanese people and society.⁴⁸⁸ In line with the newspapers articles and public lectures of the time, both exhibitions of photographs attempted to provide a glimpse of what Japanese people did at war and at home to a generic audience who attended events organised in music halls.

This new approach persisted into the first decade of the twentieth century, when the number of exhibitions related to Japan further increased, mainly because of the distribution to the proto cinemas in the region of films featuring scenes shot in Japanese urban and rural areas. Discussing this genre of motion pictures, Rachael Low has suggested that, as they provided a cursory representation of foreign countries, early-twentieth-century travel films were not produced with educational purpose,⁴⁸⁹ and should be considered no more than entertaining travelogues.⁴⁹⁰ Jennifer Lynn Peterson, instead, argues that travel films “embody a detached ‘scientific’ curiosity,” which “challenge the division between science and sensation.”⁴⁹¹ This tension is explained by the fact that, for Peterson, travel films “created a contrast between representations that emphasized the spectacular aspects of foreignness and representations that emphasized the realism of everyday life of the foreign.”⁴⁹² The films about Japan projected in the North East demonstrate Peterson’s assertion. For example, “Living Japan,” shown at the North Shields Howard Hall in 1905, was described by the local newspaper as “an intensely

⁴⁸⁷ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 17 September 1894, 2. The newspaper does not report whether Travers delivered a discussion of the images displayed in the exhibition.

⁴⁸⁸ *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 18 February 1895, 2.

⁴⁸⁹ Rachael Low, *History of British Film 1906-1914*, Vol. II. VII vols. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1948), 152.

⁴⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 152-154.

⁴⁹¹ Jennifer Lynn Peterson, *Education in the School of Dreams: Travelogues and Early Nonfiction Film* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), 28.

⁴⁹² *Ibid.*, 28.

interesting series of scenes, showing everyday events in the Mikado's capital."⁴⁹³ A similar spectacle was organised in villages and towns of different sizes such as Throckley in 1906,⁴⁹⁴ Jarrow in 1909,⁴⁹⁵ and Hartlepool in 1911.⁴⁹⁶ The latter is particularly significant because it was described as "a very fine travel picture" able to take "one on an imaginary trip to Narr [Nara], the sacred deer park of Japan."⁴⁹⁷ Rather than attempting to provide a documentary of Japan, these films mainly addressed audience's sense of wonder and escapism, but they also enriched the visual imagery of the people in the North East in regard to Japan, addressing what Peterson defined as "the realism of everyday life the foreign."

In contrast to the popularity of Japanese exhibitions in mechanics' institutes, music halls and also cinemas, the limited number of these events in regional art galleries and museums can be explained by the fact that during the period under examination the majority of the museums in the region did not own a permanent Japanese collection, but only just a few objects. For example, the main donations that formed the Japanese collections at the Laing Art Gallery, the Sunderland Museum and the Hartlepool Art Gallery occurred after 1913.⁴⁹⁸ The Berwick Museum received "some valuable Chinese and Japanese articles from Captain Crossman" in 1870⁴⁹⁹ and other items, including a set of Japanese armour, from Commander Francis Martin Norman before 1888.⁵⁰⁰ However, the local newspapers did not report any exhibition involving such Japanese pieces.

The only two regional museums which exhibited Japanese objects in the nineteenth century were the Natural History Society Museum in Newcastle and the Bowes Museum in Barnard

⁴⁹³ *Shields Daily News*, 30 November 1905, 2.

⁴⁹⁴ A colliery village west of Newcastle. *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 24 December 1906, 11.

⁴⁹⁵ *Jarrow Express*, 8 April 1910, 8.

⁴⁹⁶ *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 20 June 1911, 3.

⁴⁹⁷ *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 20 June 1911, 3.

⁴⁹⁸ With regard to the Laing Art Gallery, the Japanese collection of Albert Howard Higginbottom was donated in 1919, *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 26 July 1919. The Japanese collection at the Sunderland Museum was bequeathed by Charles Taylor Trechmann after 1965, as discussed in Les Jessop and Neil Thompson Sinclair, *Sunderland Museum: The People's Palace in the Park* (Sunderland: Sunderland Museum & Art Gallery, 1996), 39-40. With regard to the Hartlepool Art Gallery, donations of Japanese objects started from the 1920s, while the most numerous consisting of 73 netsuke was made in 1937 by T. A. Jobson. I am thankful to Anna Dodgson, Hartlepool Art Gallery Cultural Officer, for this information.

⁴⁹⁹ *The Berwick Advertiser*, 21 October 1870, 3. Captain William Crossman was in charge of Diplomatic and Consular Buildings in China and Japan from 1866 to 1869. Robert Hamilton Vetch, "Crossman, William," *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1912), 446-447.

⁵⁰⁰ Berwick Museum. After that, Sir William Burrell donated around 50 paintings and 300 decorative items including Japanese Imari pottery to the town of Berwick Upon Tweed in 1949.

Castle, however, in both cases the specimens were part of an eclectic display in which no particular attention was given to interpreting the Japanese collection from a cultural standpoint, relying on the popular understanding of Japan as a “singular country”. In October 1877 a gigantic Japanese crab was added to the Natural History Society Museum collection thanks to Captain Henry Craven St John (1837-1909), who collected the crustacean in Japan and sent it to Newcastle, along with other naturalistic specimens.⁵⁰¹ A few months after its arrival, John Hancock (1808-1890), the museum curator at that time, decided to exhibit the giant crab in a large case,⁵⁰² which in the 1884 was relocated to the Zoology room of the new museum building, close to other specimens with no relation to Japan (Figure 19). The wonder stirred by the extraordinary dimension of the crab (3,5 metres from tip to tip) led local newspapers to suggest that the specimen was the “most interesting addition” to the museum and destined to be “a leading attraction to visitors.”⁵⁰³ The popularity of the “gigantic” crab due to its unusual measure implicitly corroborated the idea of Japan as a land where singularities were the norm. It is no surprise that, in the account of the crab’s discovery by Captain St John published in newspapers a few years later, the Japanese Inland Sea, where the specimen was collected, was defined as a “fairy region.”⁵⁰⁴



Figure 19 - Zoology Room, Hancock Museum, pre-1963. Photograph. NEWHM: 2004.H20.2. Great North Museum: Hancock, Newcastle Upon Tyne. Detail.

With regard to the Bowes Museum, while the premises were different to the Natural History Society Museum – as the objects displayed were specimens of Japanese decorative art rather

⁵⁰¹ Letter NEWHM: 1996.H67.1210, Natural History Society of Northumbria Archive.

⁵⁰² Letter 1206, Natural History Society of Northumbria Archive.

⁵⁰³ *Newcastle Journal*, 8 December 1877, 4.

⁵⁰⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 25 February 1881, 6.

than zoological –, the resulting representation of Japan was still in line with the stereotype of the country popularised after its opening to the West. Inaugurated in 1892, the museum was founded by John (1811-1885) and Joséphine Bowes (1825-1874) to house their art collection which includes paintings by Old Masters as well as refined decorative objects manufactured in Europe and other parts of the world. Mostly consisting of specimens such as ceramics and lacquerware, the Japanese collection represented just a small portion of the total collection.⁵⁰⁵ Furthermore, having been exclusively purchased by Joséphine Bowes from 1862 to the year of her premature death in 1874, the collection exhibited in 1892 mostly reflected the aesthetic taste of a single individual who was active in the early phase of the European Japan mania.⁵⁰⁶ As testified by the inclusion of an Imari vase in her portrait painted by Antoine Dury (1819–c.1896), it is possible to suggest that possessing Japanese decorative art pieces represented a marker of taste and distinction for Madame Bowes (Figure 20).



Figure 20 - *Josephine Bowes*, 1850. Antoine Dury (1819–c.1896). Oil on Canvas. The Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle.

⁵⁰⁵ According to Gregory Irvine, the Japanese collections consist of around 200 objects, including mostly ceramics, but also specimens of lacquerware and also a full-size *norimono* [palanquin] Gregory Irvine, *A Guide to Japanese Art Collections in the UK* (Amsterdam: Hotei, 2004), 164. See also, Sue Thompson, “Japanese export art at the Bowes Museum,” *Arts of Asia* 21, no. 5 (1991): 115-124.

⁵⁰⁶ Caroline Chapman and Adrian Jenkins, *John & Josephine: The Creation of the Bowes Museum* (Barnard Castle: Bowes Museum, 2010), 90.

Borrowing from Eva Rovers, Joséphine's collecting practice can be described as "an opportunity for the construction and communication of an identity."⁵⁰⁷ Taking this into consideration, the Japanese collections exhibited at the Bowes Museum successfully exemplified the individual fascination with Japan of the owner rather than an attempt to provide a comprehensive account of Japanese traditional manufactures. As a result, rather than helping people in the North East to understand Japanese artistic traditions, the Japanese collection exhibited at the Bowes Museum in the late nineteenth century successfully addressed the refinement associated with the Japanese artistic production.

As anticipated, in the twentieth century this representation of Japan in the North East was eclipsed by an alternative interpretation which attempted to contextualise the developments of Japanese art and other forms of cultural expression through time. This new approach can be considered a development from what Joe Earle defined as the "Taxonomic Obsession," which characterised the British understanding of Japanese art from the 1880s to the early twentieth century.⁵⁰⁸ During these decades, museum curators such as Augustus W. Franks (1826-1897)⁵⁰⁹ embraced the quest for creating a complete taxonomic classification of Japanese fine and decorative art based on the rigorous framework of "masters," "schools," and the ideal of authenticity without referencing Japanese workshop practice, apprenticeship systems, or wider cultural issues.⁵¹⁰ Focusing exclusively on pieces with identifiable signatures or recognisable decorative styles, the heterogenous plethora of Japanese objects was reduced to a self-contained corpus of artworks which was easy to be handle by late Victorian scholars without necessity to acquire a comprehensive understanding of Japanese culture as a whole, leading to "extreme generalization[s]" about Japan.⁵¹¹ As Earle concludes, this approach signalled the British imperialistic attitude cast over Japanese artistic traditions, which were forced into categories based on European perceptions of authorship and authenticity.⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁷ Eva Rovers, "Introduction: The Art Collector - Between Philanthropy and Self-Glorification," *Journal of the History of Collections* 21, no 2 (2009): 160.

⁵⁰⁸ Joe Earle, "The Taxonomic Obsession: British Collectors and Japanese Objects, 1852-1986," *The Burlington Magazine* 128, no. 1005 (1986): 862-873.

⁵⁰⁹ Nicole Rousmaniere, "A.W. Franks, N. Ninagawa and the British Museum: Collecting Japanese Ceramics in Victorian Britain," *Orientalism* 33, no.2 (2002): 26-34.

⁵¹⁰ Earle, "The Taxonomic Obsession," 867-868.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, 867.

⁵¹² *Ibid.*, 868. As echoed by Nicole Rousmaniere and Simon Kaner, the prominent attitude of late Victorian curators toward Japanese collection "was intimately connected to the prevailing discourses of acquisition, classification and display which constituted a form of imperialism at this time." Nicole Rousmaniere and Simon Kaner,

The Japanese exhibitions organised in regional museums in the 1910s were in debt to the curatorial approach discussed by Earle, but the simultaneous involvement of artistic objects and photographs testified to the curators' attempt to provide further contextualisation. Probably influenced by the Japan-British Exhibition which opened in May 1910,⁵¹³ Sunderland Museum arranged two exhibitions dedicated exclusively to Japan: the first in August, and the second in November 1910. The exhibition in August was devoted to illustrating the "progress of education in Japan" displaying artistic works by students from "kindergarten to technical classes."⁵¹⁴ Alongside, a collection of photographs depicting Japanese students at school was exhibited,⁵¹⁵ demonstrating to the public that the displayed artefacts were the result of artistic training rather than an innate talent, which contributed to demystifying the idealised figure of Japanese people as artists by nature.⁵¹⁶ A few months later, in November 1910, a series of *ukiyo-e* prints by Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858) was shown. The exhibition was curated by Ernest Foxwell, who was simultaneously delivering a twelve-lecture course about Japan in Sunderland.⁵¹⁷ According to the newspaper article, the main display consisted of sixty-nine "views of Japan," printed on "a continuous length of paper 58ft. long," like a handscroll, however, no other details about the content of each print were provided.⁵¹⁸ In a similar manner to the exhibition organised in May, alongside the Hiroshige's prints, photographs of Japan were displayed as a visual compendium intended to provide a sort of contextualisation.

The ambition to move beyond the dehistoricised representation of Japanese culture was taken a step further in an exhibition organised at the Laing Art Gallery in 1913. Founded in 1904, the art museum was directed from the time of its opening by Charles Bernard Stevenson (1874-1957), who moved in Newcastle from Nottingham to fill the directorship.⁵¹⁹ In 1913, Stevenson designed and curated an exhibition of Japanese art, focusing in particular on *ukiyo-e* prints, Japanese swords and hand guards, paintings and ceramics, which were lent by local collectors

"Collecting East Asia in nineteenth-century Britain," *Europe and the Asia-Pacific: Culture, Identity and Representations of Region*, edited by Stephanie Lawson (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 196.

⁵¹³ For an introduction to the Japan-British Exhibition in 1910, see, Ayako Hotta-Lister, *The Japan-British Exhibition of 1910: Gateway to the Island Empire of the East* (Richmond: Japan Library, 1999).

⁵¹⁴ *Newcastle Journal*, 12 August 1910, 6.

⁵¹⁵ *Newcastle Journal*, 12 August 1910, 6.

⁵¹⁶ This stereotype is discussed in the fifth chapter of this thesis.

⁵¹⁷ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 29 November 1910, 6.

⁵¹⁸ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 29 November 1910, 6. The number might suggest a reference to the series entitled *Sixty-nine Stations of the Kiso Kaidō* (1834-1842) which Hiroshige designed with Keisai Eisen (1790-1848), however, there are no further evidence to support this speculation.

⁵¹⁹ Laia Anguix, "From Wood Shavings to an Art Collection: The Origins of the Laing Art Gallery and the Creation of its Permanent Collection, 1904–1957," Phd Thesis (Northumbria University, 2020), 153-160.

such as Albert Howard Higginbottom (1849-1930), Miss Noble and Miss Holmes, but also from collectors who resided outside of the region, such as John Hilditch (1872-1930) from Manchester, and national institutions such as the Victoria and Albert Museum.⁵²⁰ Drawing upon various newspaper reports, the objects on display were arranged following a chronological order which emphasised the stylistic development of each genre. For example, works by Iwasa Matabei (1578–1650), who is considered the legendary father of the *ukiyo-e* genre,⁵²¹ were exhibited, followed by prints designed by Hishikawa Moronobu (1618-1694), and the other early *ukiyo-e* masters. The advent of full-colour prints was documented by the works of Suzuki Harunobu (1725–1770), as well as the most popular Japanese artists in the West, namely Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) and Hiroshige. Stevenson additionally exhibited a set of woodblocks in order to illustrate to the public the various steps that Edo and Meiji-period carvers and printers followed to produce a full-colour print from the design provided by the artists.⁵²² In so doing, the technical aspects also became part of the artistic discourse in order to better understand the final artwork. To a lesser extent, a similar historical approach was used for displaying the numerous swords, *tsuba* [hand guards], *kakemono* [painted hanging scrolls], ceramics and pieces of lacquerware. In addition to the “Taxonomic Obsession” exemplified by the focus on *ukiyo-e* masters, the exhibition at the Laing Art Gallery attempted to depict Japanese art as a set of cultural expressions entangled with artistic practices such as the different phases of print production, which represented a further key to better understand the country, and its artistic traditions.

Whereas the exhibitions in Sunderland and Newcastle provided a cultural contextualisation of Japanese art, they did not directly reference the historical connection between the region and Japan. As a result, the Japanese representation also gave birth to what Tony Bennett has defined as “exhibitionary complex.” This phenomenon occurs in museums when:

the transfer of objects and bodies from the enclosed and private domain in which they had previously been displayed (but to a restricted public) into a progressively more open and public arenas where,

⁵²⁰ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 18 November 1913, 8. These lenders are discussed in the fifth chapter of this thesis. See also, *Catalogue of the Special Loan Exhibition of Japanese Art* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Laing Art Gallery, 1913).

⁵²¹ Stevenson might have read this information in William Anderson, *Descriptive and Historical Catalogue of a Collection of Japanese and Chinese Paintings in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1886), 101; or maybe was introduced to it by Laurence Binyon when the latter came to deliver his lecture in Newcastle in 1908.

⁵²² *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 18 November 1913, 8.

through the representations to which they were subjected, they formed vehicles for inscribing and broadcasting the message of power (but of a different type) throughout society.⁵²³

Inspired by Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*,⁵²⁴ Bennet draws a parallel between the ideal prison (*Panopticon*) and museum, especially in the relationship between spectacle and surveillance.⁵²⁵ Accordingly, whether moved by a genuine interest, the act of scrutiny from distance of Japanese artistic traditions also encoded a panoptic act of surveillance as well as the message of British power over Japan. Acknowledging the ongoing international trade and other mutual contact might have helped to reduce this clear separation of the Japanese "surveilled Other" and the "overseer" gaze of the curator and visitors. However, both the Sunderland Museum and Laing Art Gallery refrained from mentioning such exchanges in their promotional material and newspaper remarks. This decision further confirms the assumption that even if the global political changes involving Japan in the late nineteenth and beginning of twentieth century had an impact over the representation of the Asian country in the North East, the direct link between the British region and Japan was reluctantly associated with the public promotion of Japanese cultural expressions in the North East, in order to preserve a separation between "New" and "Old" Japan.

Japanese Shows and Entertainments

While exhibitions of Japanese art in the North East around the turn of the century attempted to offer a better understanding of the society from which the art stems through chronological organisation and photographic contextualisation, many other Japan-themed events organised in the North East of England such as acrobatic spectacles and theatrical shows had the tendency to reinforce the idea of Japan as a mysterious country in order to satisfy the Victorian thirst for exoticism and escapism, occasionally disguised as genuine interest in the country.

Considering their popular presence through Britain, references to Japanese jugglers, acrobats and dancers abound in Victorian publications, even in unlikely places. As testified in the words of Mary Haweis, an author of domestic advice manuals, the acrobatic skill of the Japanese was considered one of their innate talents:

⁵²³ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum* (London: Routledge, 1995), 60-61.

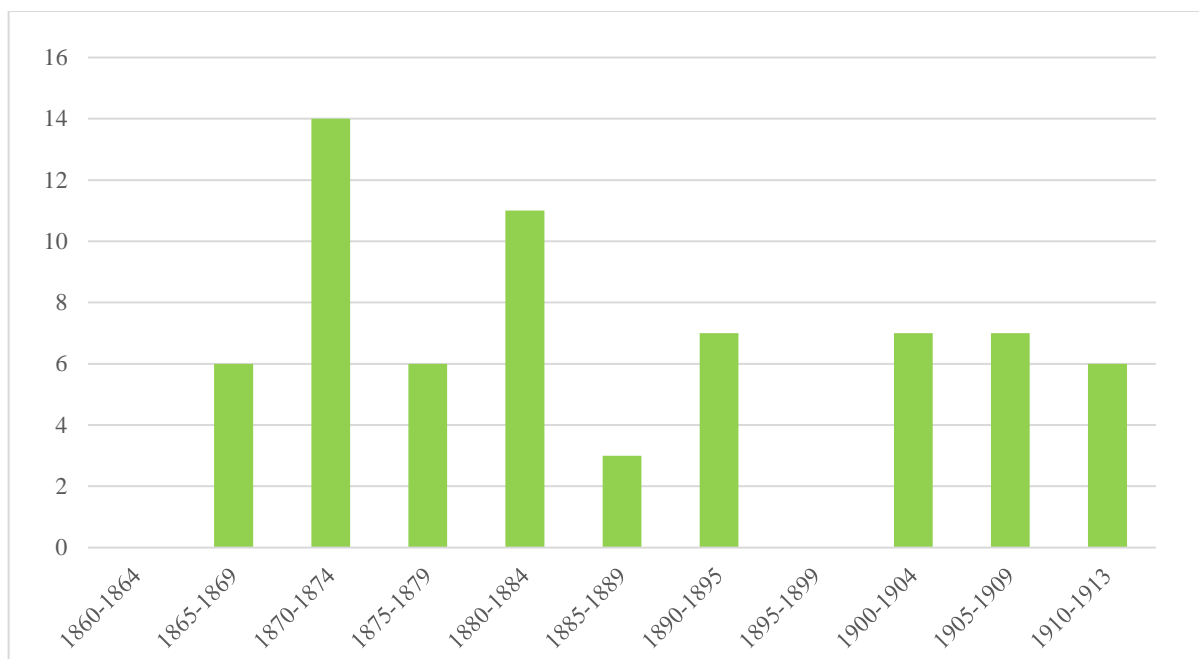
⁵²⁴ Michael Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, translated by Allen Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977).

⁵²⁵ Before Bennet also Douglas Crimp suggested this analogy, see Douglas Crimp, "On the Museum's Ruins," *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, edited by Hal Foster (Washington: Bay Press, 1985), 45. Foucault's idea is further explained in Jeffrey Minson, *Genealogies of Morals: Nietzsche, Foucault, Donzelot and the Eccentricity of Ethics* (London: Macmillan, 1985), 24.

They are artists at heart, the Japanese, because they love and study nature so deeply; and the feats of those climbing jugglers, and their surprising knowledge of the proper distribution of weight, now familiar to their British imitators, were founded upon the natural laws of balance which the flower obeys.⁵²⁶

This extract is taken from her book *The Art of Decoration*, which was one of the many Victorian publications whose aim was to offer practical suggestions on how homes should be tastefully decorated and arranged. The fact that Japanese acrobats were chosen to symbolise the way in which Japanese understood and displayed balance suggests that the association between them and Japanese culture was deep rooted in the Victorian mind.

Graph 5 - Japan-themed Acrobatic Spectacles in the North East of England, 1860-1913.



Source: British Newspaper Archive. See Appendix D.

Considering that the early companies of performers from Japan arrived in Britain in the 1860s, it is not surprising that Japanese acrobats became one of the metonyms of the East Asian country by the 1880s (Graph 5). The fame of Japanese jugglers and acrobats was so huge that even before their arrival in Britain,⁵²⁷ local artists attempted to emulate their signature tricks. The “Japanese Butterflies Trick,” for example, had been performed in England since 1864 by “Dr. Lynn,” the stage name of Hugh Washington Simmons (1831 - 1899), who probably saw the

⁵²⁶ Mary Eliza Haweis, *The Art of Decoration* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1881), 208.

⁵²⁷ The first to reach Britain was the Gensui Troupe in February 1867, who performed various tricks in London and in other parts of England, but not in the North East. Frederik Schodt, *Professor Risley and the Imperial Japanese Troupe: How an American Acrobat Introduced Circus to Japan and Japan to the West* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2012), 199.

trick when he visited Japan in 1863 (Figure 21).⁵²⁸ In 1866, a newspaper published in the North East provided a detailed description of it, explaining its execution:

Out of two tinted tissue paper he cuts pair of “butterflies”, and, by the use of a fan, sends them fluttering into the air, where they fly about, circling round after the manner of butterflies in real life, and finally flutter down and settle into a hat, as the live insects do into the rose bushes.⁵²⁹

In June of the following year, the Japanese Butterflies Trick was performed in the North East by members of a company called Der Hang,⁵³⁰ who not only introduced local audiences to an exotic number raising the hype for the arrival of the first native Japanese troupe, but also appropriated a style of entertaining from a foreign culture upon noting local interest to their financial benefit.



Figure 21 – Japanese Juggles at St. Martins Hall. *Illustrated London News*, 23 February 1867.

In October 1867 the first Japanese native company, named Great Dragon Troupe, reached the North East. “Twenty-Four native Japan artistes” performed for six nights at the Newcastle Music Hall.⁵³¹ As argued by Penny Summerfield, music halls were spaces in which patriotism

⁵²⁸ Hugh Simmons Lynn, *The Adventures of the Strange Man* (London: Gilbert & Rivington, 1873).

⁵²⁹ *Durham County Advertiser*, 11 May 1866, 3.

⁵³⁰ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 14 June 1867, 1.

⁵³¹ *Newcastle Journal*, 3 October 1867, 2.

and Empire were successfully marketed as popular entertainments,⁵³² therefore, on the surface, these spectacles might appear no more than those “human showcases” which Paul Greenhalgh has defined as “vehicles of imperialism” with respect to International Expositions.⁵³³ However, the Japanese jugglers’ show was not promoted solely as mere entertainment, but was described as “instructive as well as amusing, showing as it does, the Amusements, Modes, and Habit of Life of the strange, wonderful, and until very recently, unknown People to the civilized world.”⁵³⁴ This limited, but present, didactic connotation is in line with Sadiyah Qureshi’s assertion that in Victorian times such human exhibitions were not simply “entertaining spectacles” but “intercultural encounters and topical events.”⁵³⁵ While Qureshi focuses mainly on freak shows and human spectacles, it is reasonable to suggest that the same framework fits other kinds of public events in which the exhibition of living humans was part of an entertainment’s attraction. Especially from the late 1860s and early 1870s, the genuine interest in Japan often conflated into the British desire for exoticism, as previously demonstrated by the warm welcome received by the Japanese ambassadors to Newcastle in 1862, and how they were constantly followed by a curious crowd desirous to glimpse their peculiar facial features, hair dressings and clothes. Early troupes of Japanese performers probably took advantage of such enthusiasm, and numerous shows were organised in the North East during the decade from 1865 to 1875 (Graph 5).

Qureshi also suggest that in addition to the popular success of such entertainment events, creative entrepreneurs converted passing curiosity into tangible profits, reinforcing the image of foreign people as commodities that could be consumed. In Britain, the most prominent figure in this kind of business, was Tannaker Buhicrosan, who allegedly forged a Dutch-Japanese origin in order to promote himself and his company of native Japanese performers.⁵³⁶ From the late 1860s, Tannaker toured in Britain with his troupe of acrobats, dancers and musicians,

⁵³² Penny Summerfield, “Patriotism and Empire: Music-hall Entertainment, 1870–1914,” *Imperialism and Popular Culture*, edited by John MacKenzie (Manchester University Press, 1986), 42.

⁵³³ Paul Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas: The Expositions Universelles, Great Exhibitions and World's Fairs, 1851-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 82.

⁵³⁴ *Newcastle Journal*, 3 October 1867, 2.

⁵³⁵ Sadiyah Qureshi, *Peoples on Parade: Exhibitions, Empire, and Anthropology in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 8.

⁵³⁶ The mystery around Tannaker Buhicrosan has been recently unravelled in the monograph written by Paul Budden. Paul Budden, *Paper Butterflies: Unravelling the Mystery of Tannaker Buhicrosan* (Columbus, OH: Gatekeeper Press, 2020). Tanneker’s Japanese origin was previously considered reliable by various scholars, see, Sir Hugh Cortazzi, *Japan in Late Victorian London: The Japanese Native Village in Knightsbridge and 'The Mikado', 1885* (Norwich: Sainsbury Institute, 2009), 49-58.

visiting the North East on multiple occasions. The troupe's first visit was in 1869, when his Royal Tycoon Troupe performed a variegated spectacle including acrobatics performances and a concert by Japanese ladies in Sunderland.⁵³⁷ Tannaker's way of promoting his shows further reinforced the commodification of Japanese culture and its people in the eye of the British public, by giving away a "Japanese curiosity" to each person who attended his spectacles during the tour of 1877 (Figure 22)⁵³⁸ and 1883 (Figure 23).⁵³⁹ This act not only created a strong bond between the consumption of Japanese objects and the "Orientalised" spectacles, but also associated the British desire to see native Japanese people with receiving Japanese goods in return. It might be suggested that this idea was later extended in the Japanese Native Village, which Tannaker organised in London in 1885. In a bazaar-like scenario, Japanese artisans, re-located by Tannaker directly from Japan, not only represented the main attraction in their exotic attire, but they also made original articles which could be purchased by the visitors.⁵⁴⁰ As discussed in the next chapter of this thesis, Tannaker's Japanese Native Village was taken as inspiration around which to organise Japan-themed fairs and charity bazaars in the North East during the late 1880s.



Figure 22 - Tannaker's Japanese Troupe, South Shields, *Shields Daily Gazette*, 21 July 1877, 1.

⁵³⁷ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 2 March 1869, 1.

⁵³⁸ The first tour touched Newcastle, Sunderland, Middlesbrough, Darlington, South Shields and Jarrow.

⁵³⁹ The second tour of 1883, the same cities plus Berwick upon Tweed, Alnwick, West Hartlepool, and Bishop Auckland, but without Newcastle and Middlesbrough

⁵⁴⁰ Regarding to the objectification of Japanese people at the Japanese Native Village, see, Amelia Scholtz, "Almond-Eyed Artisans'/ 'Dishonouring the National Polity': The Japanese Village Exhibition in Victorian London," *Japanese Studies* 27, no. 1 (2007): 73-85.



Figure 23 - Tannaker's Japanese Troupe, *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 15 May 1883, 1.

The dramatic, but temporary, decrease of acrobatic and juggling performances registered in the 1890s should be put in relation with the cultural shock provoked by the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). During the period between 1895 and 1900, no shows were advertised in newspapers published in the North East; while in the following decade the number returned to their previous lustrum (Graph 5). The conflict between Japan and China might have inhibited Japanese artists from travelling to Britain, but it does not clarify the reason why also British acrobats who incorporated Japanese elements in their numbers ceased to perform in the North East after 1892.⁵⁴¹

The turn of the century represented a fresh start for Japanese performers in European theatres, and various new troupes sailed to Europe, stopping also in the North East of England. Among the many, Japanese actresses/dancers such as Sada Yacco (1872-1946) and Hanako (b.1868) became so popular that they were asked to perform in front of the Prince of Wales, French and American Presidents, the Russian Emperor and other notables.⁵⁴² According to Stanca Scholzcionca, the only difference from the previous troupes was that these “were probably the first theatre actors abroad (albeit not belonging to the establishment), and they were offered a new

⁵⁴¹ It can be speculated that the war created a fracture in the monolithic idea of Japan and consequently, most of the impresarios and company owners might have decided to re-set their standards.

⁵⁴² Yoko Chiba, “Sada Yacco and Kawakami: Performers of Japonisme,” *Modern Drama* 35, no. 1 (1992): 35.

framework, which ensured excellent visibility and press coverage.”⁵⁴³ While the public in the North East did not benefit from the chance to see Sada Yacco or Hanako, other performers such as Otora San and the Lukushimas stopped frequently in the region (Figure 24).⁵⁴⁴ At this point, any didactic connotation was completely erased, as testified by the newspaper articles in which most of these spectacles were promoted as “a rapid entertainment, elegantly costumed and set in elaborate scenery.”⁵⁴⁵



Figure 24 - Otora San, Lukushima Troupe, Japanese Entertainers on Tour in Great Britain, 1900-1910. Photograph. Public Domain.

While entertaining spectacles such as acrobatic performances were focused on the individual or groups of performers, large-scale theatrical shows produced during the late Victorian period based their attractivity on the ability of recreating spectacular or believable scenery. Michael Booth has defined this phenomenon as “spectacular theatre,” in which the “pace of production, the particular uses of mass, color, light, and costume, the technique of the actor [...] have no

⁵⁴³ Stanca Scholz-Cionca, “Japanesque Shows for Western Markets: Loïe Fuller and Japanese Theatre Tours Through Europe (1900-08),” *Journal of Global Theatre History* 1, no. 1 (2016): 46.

⁵⁴⁴ Otora San and the Lukushimas performed in South Shields in May 1907, *Shields Daily News*, 21 May 1907, 3; while in North Shields and Sunderland in December 1909 and January 1910, *Shields Daily Gazette*, 6 January 1910, 1.

⁵⁴⁵ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 28 December 1909, 11.

parallel on the Western dramatic stage of today.”⁵⁴⁶ Accordingly, William Storm has suggested that an actor on stage was attractive not for his power to depict a specific role or to express a special emotion, but for his ability to integrate himself into the scenery. The theatre managers sought to “make of the actor’s physical instrument a visual spectacle,”⁵⁴⁷ and to produce an illusionary “real” past on the stage. Even though Booth and Storm were mainly referring to Shakespearean and other historical productions, the same idea might be extended to operettas set in “exotic” countries, which were staged all over Britain, including in musical halls and theatres throughout the North East.

Although Japan was not a British colony, the imperial discourse embodied also the representation of Japanese culture in theatrical plays to satisfy the exotic desire associated with the British fascination with the exoticised image of Japanese culture. As Marty Gould argues, exotic plays and similar forms of spectacle offered Victorian audiences the illusion of unmediated access to the imperial periphery, “separated from the action by only the thin shadow of the proscenium arch, theatrical audiences observed cross-cultural contact in action.”⁵⁴⁸ In other words, it was in the theatrical venues that the public was put into contact with the places and peoples of empire.⁵⁴⁹ Accordingly, the visual spectacle had to represent the idealised image of pre-modern Japan with a degree of accuracy which lived up to the public expectations.

Thanks to the global scale of theatrical plays, this illusion of unmediated and immediate access to the exotic Japan was not an exclusive privilege of metropolitan centres. As Christopher Balme and Nic Leonhardt posit, the late nineteenth and beginning of twentieth century was a period which:

saw a huge outflow of theatrical productions from metropolitan centres that brought the full gamut of performance genres from vaudeville acts to high opera to numerous towns and cities around the globe. In this ‘economy of desire and gratification’ theatre was predicated on mobility and transience for its economic survival, and promised palpable connection with the metropolitan centres and ways of life. Theatre was thus a part of circulating consumer products, which needs to be considered within a research paradigm that balances economic with ideological and aesthetic imperatives.⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁶ Michael Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre 1850-1910* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1981), 35.

⁵⁴⁷ William Storm, “Impression Henry Irving: The Performance in the Portrait by Jules Bastien-Lepage,” *Victorian Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Social, Political, and Cultural Studies* 46, no. 3 (2004): 403.

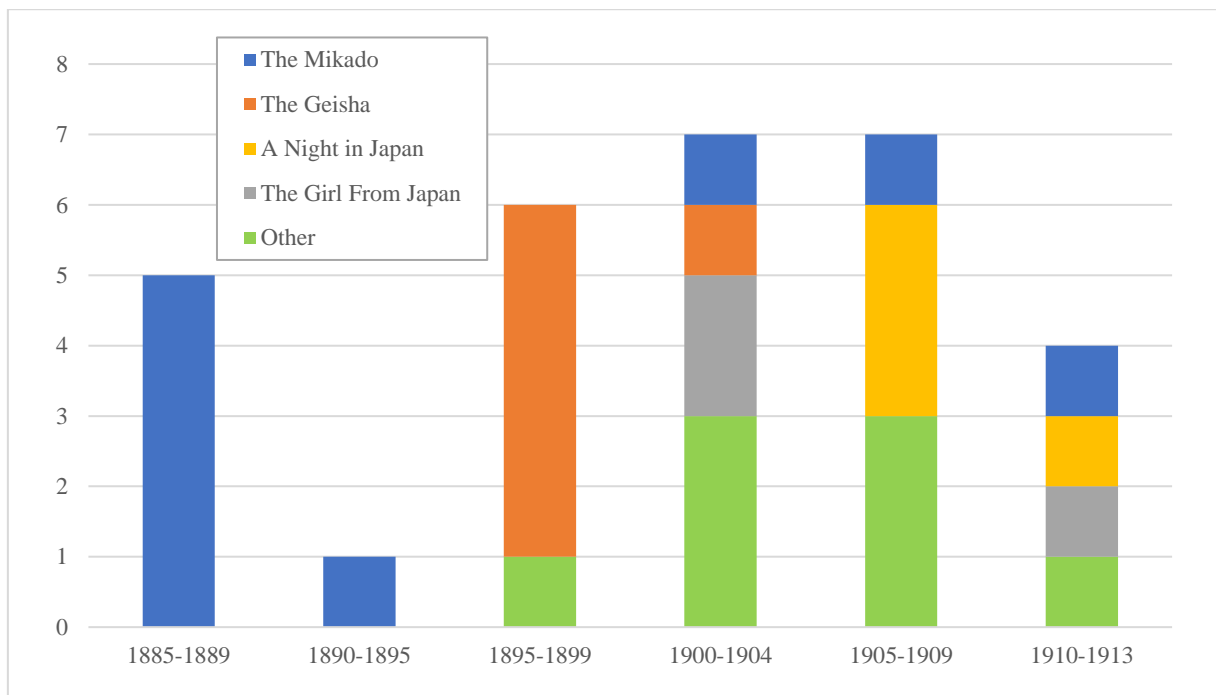
⁵⁴⁸ Marty Gould, *Nineteenth-Century Theatre and the Imperial Encounter* (London: Routledge, 2011), 15; see also Jeffrey Richards, *Imperialism and Music: Britain, 1876-1953* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); Claire Mabilat, *Orientalism and Representations of Music in the Nineteenth-Century British Popular Art* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

⁵⁴⁹ John MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 176-207.

⁵⁵⁰ Christopher Balme and Nic Leonhardt, “Introduction: Theatrical Trade Routes,” *Journal of Global Theatre History* 1, no. 1 (2016): 4.

This mobility is testified to in the North East of England, in which most of the British plays set in Japan arrived with no relevant delay, and were staged in both large and small centres. In the late nineteenth century, the stages were dominated by the two musical comedies, *The Mikado* (1885) in the 1880s and *The Geisha* (1896) in the 1890s, while in the early twentieth century the offerings became more diverse (Graph 6). The plays reached theatres located in highly populated towns such as Newcastle and Middlesbrough, but also smaller centres such as Great Lumley,⁵⁵¹ or Blyth,⁵⁵² demonstrating how diffuse the network of provincial theatrical productions was.

Graph 6 – Theatrical Plays in the North East of England, 1885-1913.



Source: British Newspaper Archive. See Appendix E.

The theatrical play that more than any other promoted the fascination with Japan among a wider audience was *The Mikado; or, The Town of Titipu*, a musical comedy which premiered at the Savoy Theatre, London, in March 1885. The story by William Gilbert (1836-1911), who wrote the libretto, revolves around theme of death by capital punishment, however, the author treats it as a trivial issue, in which each absurdity, such as the capital crime of flirting, is taken to its logical conclusion. Setting the opera in Japan, an exotic location far away from Britain, allowed Gilbert to satirise Victorian customs and institutions more freely by disguising them as

⁵⁵¹ *Durham County Advertiser*, 2 March 1900, 5.

⁵⁵² *Blyth News*, 2 January 1912, 2.

Japanese.⁵⁵³ The sexual prudishness of British culture as well as the bad habit of appointing different political posts to the same person – symbolised by Pooh-Bah, “Lord High Everything Else” – were exposed as human weaknesses and follies which Gilbert explored in his signature, family-friendly, “topsy-turvy” style. The 672 consecutive performances at the Savoy Theatre from 1885 to 1887, one of the longest runs of any theatre piece up to that time, testified that the social themes treated in *The Mikado* resonated with the late Victorian popular consciousness, also thanks to the Japanese settings which capitalised on the contemporary British fascination with Japan.⁵⁵⁴

In the North East, the London success of *The Mikado* was reported as early as March 1885, with both its satire of British society as well as its “accurate” representation of Japan mentioned as being among the operetta’s highlights. The numerous reviews that appeared in regional newspapers praised almost every aspect of the production, which was described as “bright and sparkling, witty and paradoxical, redolent of pungent satire, and laughter-provoking comicalities.”⁵⁵⁵ According to an article published in the *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, the caricature of the British politics was so evident that “although [Gilbert] laid the scene on the story in medieval Japan, most of his characters under their Japanese guise are recognisable as old friends.”⁵⁵⁶ Regarding the representation of Japan, it was affirmed that:

[...] the piece is a triumph. What has been aimed at has been an exact reproduction of Japanese society, as shown to us in native drawings, [...] the men appearing with half shaven polls and wearing long richly designed robes of different hues, and the women with strange head gear and fans, looking as if they had stepped out of a Japanese picture.⁵⁵⁷

As emphasised in the newspaper article, the “exact reproduction of Japanese society” portrayed in the musical comedy was a projection of the Japanese decorative objects which at that time were already part of the Victorian consumer culture. As that “Japan” was already part of the

⁵⁵³ Yokoyama has suggested that this literary technique had commonly been practiced in Britain since the mid-1860s. Toshio Yokoyama, *Japan in the Victorian Mind: A Study of Stereotyped Images of a Nation, 1850-80* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987), 170-175.

⁵⁵⁴ Cortazzi, *Japan in Late Victorian London*, 65-68.

⁵⁵⁵ *Newcastle Courant*, 20 March 1885, 4.

⁵⁵⁶ *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 16 March 1885, 4. Ten year later, an open letter sent to the editor of the newspaper appeared on the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* mentioning a character from *The Mikado*, Pooh Bah. The anonymous author wrote from White-le-Head, a village in the County Durham, and while complaining about the bad habit of appointing various governmental duties under the same individual, he recalled the character invented by Gilbert who was in charge of multiple posts. *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 15 March 1894, 4.

⁵⁵⁷ *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 16 March 1885, 4.

everyday life of the British middle class, it might be suggested that, paradoxically, it was even more real and tangible than the East Asian country discussed in newspapers. Grace Lavery defines this conundrum as “queer realism,” in which “the *Mikado*’s jovial ambiguity about its location makes claims about the real world [...] while refusing to represent that world realistically.”⁵⁵⁸

The attraction of this sense of dislocation in the North East among the members of the middle class was acknowledged by retailers and event organisers right after the show’s successful debut in local theatres. *The Mikado* debuted at Newcastle’s Theatre Royal in October 1885, and the *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle* reported that the sale of advance booked seating before the first performance was an unprecedented success.⁵⁵⁹ Following its debut, the word “Mikado” began to be used to promote Japan-themed charity bazaars and shop departments as a way of attracting audiences interested in undertaking temporary “virtual travel” without leaving their towns or villages.⁵⁶⁰ As discussed by Emile de Bruijn, in his study of the meaning of Chinese wallpapers in country homes, this kind of “virtual travel” had a long tradition in Britain, beginning in the eighteenth century, when the British fascination with China reigned. Through decorative arts, landscape gardening, or interior design, country house owners could travel via their residence.⁵⁶¹ At that time, virtual travelling was exclusive to the elite families, but from the second half of the nineteenth century, this privilege was extended to the rising middle class, who achieved a disposable income enabling them to buy exotic goods to decorate their homes, or could experience exotic places through public events such as a charity bazaar.

The ambiguous representation of Japanese culture within the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta started to be officially questioned in the early 1900s, demonstrating that at the turn of the century a new sensibility concerning Japan had emerged, as discussed earlier in this thesis. In

⁵⁵⁸ Grace Lavery, *Quaint, Exquisite. Victorian Aesthetics and the Idea of Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 37.

⁵⁵⁹ *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 10 October 1885, 11. The review written by a Newcastle critic confirmed most of the positive comments by the London correspondents. Underlining that “the introduction of the Japanese element contributes freshness and keen interest to the opera,” the author of the review is not surprised that after the “success of the opera this week [...] it was found necessary to have an afternoon performance to-day (Saturday).” *Newcastle Weekly Chronicle*, 17 October 1885, 12. The success of the operetta was reported also in newspapers of different towns such as Sunderland and West Hartlepool, in which *The Mikado* debuted in 1886. *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 16 October 1885, 1.

⁵⁶⁰ This aspect is discussed further in the third and fourth chapter of this thesis.

⁵⁶¹ Emile de Bruijn, “Virtual Travel and Virtuous Objects: Chinoiseries and the Country House,” *Travel and the British Country House: Cultures, Critiques and Consumption in the Long Eighteenth Century*, edited by Jon Stobart (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017), 63–85.

1907 the permission to perform *The Mikado* in Britain was temporarily inhibited by the competent British authorities in order to avoid any diplomatic issues when Prince Fushimi was expected to visit London.⁵⁶² The protest against this ban reached the House of Commons. It claimed that as *The Mikado* was designed to offer a neutral stage to caricature British political culture, the Japanese setting was just a generic setting which should not be considered more offensive than the representation of Denmark in *Hamlet*.⁵⁶³ As strongly asserted by G. K. Chesterton in his article in *Littell's Living Age*, "there is not, [in] the whole length of *The Mikado*, a single joke against Japan. They are all [...] against England."⁵⁶⁴ Recent scholarship has questioned this assumption, pointing at the efforts to arrange accurate replicas of Japanese traditional costumes, which inevitably associated a visually truthful image of Japan to an exotic country set in some undefined time in history, taking no account of the economic and social changes that occurred in Japan in the 1870s and 1880s.⁵⁶⁵ One must also take into account the representation of Japan in *The Mikado* cannot be underestimated as a secondary consideration simply because, as demonstrated by Booth, Victorian "spectacular theatre" based its appeal on the arrangement of "realistic" scenery to attract its audience. However, both the metatheatrical references in the libretto⁵⁶⁶ and the critics' reviews acknowledge that the "Japan" portrayed in the Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta was the one depicted on the Japanese decorative objects rather than the actual Asian country. The fact that this representation of Japan was perceived as a potential diplomatic issue by a British authority further confirms that in the early twentieth century the perception of Japanese culture was dynamic and complex, not exclusively a commodifiable cultural entity.

The Mikado had been the only theatrical play set in Japan staged in the North East until 1896, when *The Geisha, a story of a tea house* was performed in Darlington.⁵⁶⁷ The libretto of the latter was written by Owen Hall. Harry Greenbank wrote the lyrics and Sidney Jones the music

⁵⁶² The news was reported also in regional press, *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 30 April 1907, 12; however, specific action was taken against the Middlesbrough Amateur Operatic Society, Andrew Goodman, "The Fushimi Incident: Theatre Censorship and *The Mikado*," *Journal of Legal History* 1, no. 3 (1980): 297–299.

⁵⁶³ Goodman, "The Fushimi Incident," 297–302.

⁵⁶⁴ Quoted in Geoffrey Smith, *The Savoy Operas: A New Guide to Gilbert and Sullivan* (New York: Universe Books, 1985), 141.

⁵⁶⁵ Josephine Lee, *The Japan of Pure Invention: Gilbert and Sullivan's the Mikado* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

⁵⁶⁶ In the second act, a character is said to be gone Knightsbridge, a part of London in which from 1885 to 1887 was held the Japanese Native Village. William Schwenck Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, *The Complete Annotated Gilbert and Sullivan*, edited by Ian Bradley (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 361.

⁵⁶⁷ *Northern Echo*, 13 October 1896, 1.

score. Debuting in April 1896 at Daly's Theatre in London, the plot of *The Geisha* revolves around Reginald Fairfax, a British Lieutenant stationed in Japan, and his fiancée, Molly Seamore, back in the Britain. In an effort to stop Reginald from falling in love with O Mimosa San, a local geisha, Molly travels to Japan and dresses up as a geisha herself to try and win him back. The stylistic form of the operetta follows the tropes of the Edwardian musical comedy, which successfully replaced Victorian, family-friendly Gilbert and Sullivan operas when they began to lose their dominance on the musical stage in the early 1890s.⁵⁶⁸ In general, the main elements that characterised the new British theatrical style were lighter, more romantic storylines, featuring the modern fashions and culture of the day. In the case of *The Geisha*, exotic desire was skilfully incorporated to appeal to both men and women: the former could enjoy Japan as a kind of flirting paradise in which British imperial agents were free to express their manliness,⁵⁶⁹ while the latter could be enthralled by the adventures of a female character such as Molly, who was able to capture the secrets of Japanese femininity.

In a similar manner to *The Mikado*, newspapers published in the North East mostly expressed approval for *The Geisha*. A few days after the debut at the Daily Theatre in London, 25th of April 1896, *The Geisha* was depicted as the new “Japanese spectacle” after *The Mikado* in the *Shields News*,⁵⁷⁰ while the *Newcastle Evening Chronicle* underlined how “charming” the Japanese dresses were.⁵⁷¹ Hall, Greenbank and Sidney’s musical comedy reached the North East in October of the same year and was staged for a week-long season in Darlington, Newcastle, Stockton and Middlesbrough. Local newspapers praised such theatrical events for the scenery,⁵⁷² as well as for the balanced combination of Japanese and English subjects, in which the attractivity of the exotic setting was explicitly blended.⁵⁷³ More particularly, Japanese costumes were so important in the eyes of the North East readership that in a review,

⁵⁶⁸ For an introduction to Edwardian musical comedies and his putative father George Edwardes (1855-1915), see, Alan Hyman, *The Gaiety Years* (London: Cassell & Co., 1975).

⁵⁶⁹ In the opening chorus, it is sung “Here they come! Oh, look and see! / Great big English sailor men! / Englishman he likes our tea, / Comes to taste it now and then. / Great big sailors walk like this (imitating) / Fight with any man they please – / Marry little English Miss, / Flirt with pretty Japanese! / Here they come! etc.” Owen Hall, *The Geisha: A Story of a Tea House. A Japanese Musical Play in Two Acts* (London: Emile Littler, 1949), 5.

⁵⁷⁰ *Shields Daily News*, 29 April 1896, 4.

⁵⁷¹ *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 27 April 1896, 4.

⁵⁷² *Northern Echo*, 17 October 1896, 4.

⁵⁷³ *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 17 October 1896, 4;

each kimono worn by the female characters was described in detail.⁵⁷⁴ As discussed by Elizabeth Kramer and Akiko Savas, the success of Japanese female costumes in late Victorian popular theatre should be ascribed to “the fashionable link between kimono on-stage and off,” taking into consideration that at the end of the nineteenth century such dress was “transformed from an exotic product into a very fashionable and widely accessible garment” through Britain departments stores, such as Liberty’s, Harrods, and Whiteleys.⁵⁷⁵

However, the musical comedy also aroused some criticisms. A Newcastle critic mentioned the weakness of the plot, but he concluded that this deficiency did not inhibit the appreciation of the operetta thanks to the “power of charming [of] the performers,” who wore “varied and beautiful” costumes.⁵⁷⁶ Another critic denounced the lack of accuracy in very specific elements of the costumes:

The geishas’ fans may be quite incorrect, the cup [?] of the mousmes’ costumes hopelessly wrong, the coolies of their rickshaws lacking in some necessary details that would immediately strike the eye of a native visitors.⁵⁷⁷

This attention to detail not only confirms that, for the sake of Victorian spectacular theatre, an accurate reproduction of Japanese themes was not taken for granted, but it also suggests that, considering the various public lectures organised at Newcastle cultural institutions in which photographs and lantern slides of Japan were shown, it is more than possible that the anonymous critic had a frame of reference from which to point to such inaccuracies.

⁵⁷⁴ “Miss Leverentz first appears in a crimson kimow [sic] embroidered in mountain ash berries and leaves, the obi, or sash, being of a darker crimson satin. Large chrysanthemums are introduced on either side of the head dress, in which tiny Japanese fans and enamelled hair pins are thrust. A second dress, worn for the auction scene, is a purple shot shilk [sic], with a hand-worked frontal of honey suckle flowers. Her third costume is a dress of natural silk, with the colour intact as it left the cocoon. The last costume is a brown silk, worked with pink and white hawthorn buds. Miss Maud Bowden wears a bewitching yachting costume of blue and white flannel, with a smart sailor hat, and when she is disguised as a Japanese her kimono is a light shade of emerald green, with embossed stalks and butterflies worked in gold thread, plentifully distributed of the surface of the robe. She wears lilac coloured chrysanthemums in her hair, and emerald green sandals. In the second act her costume is a white crepe de chene [sic]. The obi is a plain silk figured in blue and gold, while Miss Warren appears in copper shot silk. The Japanese Geisha or tea girls wear soft robes of white silk, massively adorned with birds and reptiles. The white flannel dresses of the visitors complete the party” *Northern Echo*, 30 October 1896, 3.

⁵⁷⁵ Elizabeth Kramer and Akiko Savas, “The Kimono Craze: From Exoticism to Fashionability,” in *Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk*, edited by Anna Jackson (London: V&A Publishing, 2020), 181, 191. See also Arisa Yamaguchi, “Experiencing Japanese Kimono: Costumes of the Japanese-Themed Performances in the West End Theatres 1885-1905,” *Studies in Victorian Culture* 18 (2020): 43–67.

⁵⁷⁶ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 20 October 1896, 8.

⁵⁷⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 24 October 1896, 5.

As the press in the North East promoted *The Geisha* as a spiritual sequel to *The Mikado*, the numerous differences between the two musical comedies highlight how the perception of Japan changed in the 1890s. As discussed by Jeffrey Richards:

Gilbert and Sullivan's opera is a satirical vision of the late-Victorian England, full of witty and clever patter songs, pointed parody and ingenious pastiche. Jones's musical, eschewing satire and verbal ingenuity, concentrates much more straightforwardly on romance and the exotic, constantly stressing the difference between Occidentals and Orientals and the 'Otherness' of the Japanese.⁵⁷⁸

Accordingly, in *The Mikado* the encounter between Japanese and British culture only occurred taking into consideration the metatheatrical level; while in *The Geisha*, Molly's transformation into a Japanese icon of femininity is also a metaphor of the Western penetration into Japanese culture as well as a temporary appropriation of Japanese cultural distinctiveness. In addition, while in Gilbert's libretto the representation of Japan mainly functions as a neutral space in which the satire of British sexual prudishness take place, Owen Hall not only stages inter-racial filtration between Western and Japanese characters, but also suggests that by adopting native disguise, Western women could pass for Japanese, and because of this new temporary identity, they were entitled to flirt with no particular moral implication.⁵⁷⁹ This resonates especially with the contemporary practice of cultural cross-dressing that British ladies performed in Japan-themed charity bazaars, as it is discussed in more detail in the next chapter of this thesis.

The role of Molly in relation to the development of the story and the other native Japanese geisha perfectly describes the complexity in defining the role of British woman in the transcultural dialogue between Britain and Japan. As suggested by Hashimoto Yorimitsu, the fact that it is a female character who seeks for Japanese cultural authenticity might be considered an allusion to women travellers who "after the 1850s [...] had advanced into a traditionally exclusive masculine domain,"⁵⁸⁰ namely the exploration of the "virgin" interior.⁵⁸¹ In the story, however, Molly's progressive attitude is not celebrated, but it is depicted as the cause of her troubles, which made her realise that all she wants is just "a young man on his own."⁵⁸² In so doing, according to Hashimoto, "the plot puts a progressive woman in her

⁵⁷⁸ Richards, *Imperialism and Music*, 266.

⁵⁷⁹ The development of the plot underlines that disguising as Japanese might cause unexpected problem, but it also represents its natural solution.

⁵⁸⁰ Yorimitsu Hashimoto, "Japanese Tea Party: Representations of Victorian Paradise and Playground in *The Geisha* (1896)," *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict*, edited by John Walton (Clevedon, Buffalo, Toronto: Channel View Publications, 2005), 116.

⁵⁸¹ For an introduction to the concept of "virgin land" in the colonial discourse, see, Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (London: Routledge, 1995), 30-31.

⁵⁸² Hall, *The Geisha*, 66.

rightful place by reconciling her to traditional Victorian values.”⁵⁸³ From a metatheatrical point of view, though, the fact that British actresses also performed Japanese roles put them in relation with Molly’s endeavour of embodying the East-Asian femininity. As opined by Yoshihara Mari with regard to the American context, performing “Asia” enabled white women to bolster their image as “New Women” because through “Orientalism [they] gained freedom from the conventions of Western gender and sexual relations.”⁵⁸⁴ At the same time, by reinforcing the stereotyped submissiveness of Japanese women, British actresses played a crucial role in diluting the emerging image of Japan as a world power. As a result, the position held by these women simultaneously reinforced and subverted imperialism as a masculine Western discourse and became an ambiguous but acceptable model for “ladies” and girls to follow, whether they were advocates of female empowerment or simply Japan enthusiasts.

Thanks to the contribution of Hall, Greenbank, and Jones’s operetta, in the early 1900s, the myth of the geisha as a metonym of Japanese femininity as well as of the disappearing “Old” Japan reached its peak, becoming part of British popular culture. Since the English illustrated edition of Pierre Loti’s *Madame Chrysanthème* (1889), the geisha or *mousmé* became a synonym of exotic beauty, diluting most of the negative connotation linked to her profession, which, according to Ian Littlewood, was achieved by depicting it as an “un-European mixture of commercial sex and social decorum.”⁵⁸⁵ British authors such as Sir Edwin Arnold with his poem *The Musmee* (1892), and Clive Holland’s *My Japanese Wife* (1897) and *Mousmé: A Story of West and East* (1901), further popularised the theme, bridging factual travel narratives with the fictional literature. This led to the enduring success of the geisha as the symbol of Japanese femininity in the early twentieth century, becoming the main focus of every theatrical play set in Japan after *The Geisha* (1896), beginning with Giacomo Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly* (1904), which was never staged in the North East of England during the period under examination.

As kimonos, fans, and umbrellas were among the main attributes of the geisha, most Japan-themed productions staged in the North East during the 1900s based their attractiveness on featuring actresses displaying those Japanese commodities. For example, *The Girl from Japan* (1904) by Wilfred Carr with music by Colet Dare was staged in South Shields and Newcastle

⁵⁸³ Hashimoto, “Japanese Tea Party,” 116.

⁵⁸⁴ Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 125.

⁵⁸⁵ Ian Littlewood, *The Idea of Japan: Western Images, Western Myths* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1996), 133.

in 1904,⁵⁸⁶ and eight years later in Blyth,⁵⁸⁷ featuring a character who had no fewer than nine changes of costume, most of them kimonos.⁵⁸⁸ As discussed in newspapers published in the region, the same emphasis on Japanese traditional dresses was the highlight of *A Night in Japan*, which was performed in Sunderland, Stockton on Tees, and Hartlepool by a touring company named “Marie Santoi and her Merry Japs.”⁵⁸⁹ The only exception occurred on the occasion of the premiere of *The Mousmé* (1911) in the North East in February 1912,⁵⁹⁰ of which a local newspaper exclusively emphasised the impressive scenic effect of an earthquake.⁵⁹¹ However, rather than the first sign of fatigue with the popularity of the kimono in the region,⁵⁹² it is more likely that the journalist simply considered the spectacular representation of a seismic activity on stage the most prominent characteristic of operettas as well as a successful attempt to refresh the genre and attract a wide audience.

Conclusion

In the North East of England, towns and villages alike could experience and learn about Japan through a variety of public events such as lectures, exhibitions, acrobatic performances and theatrical plays throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Drawing upon newspaper articles and archive material, this regional study has unearthed for the first time numerous examples of leisure activities associated with both high and popular culture. Taking into consideration this cultural dynamism, each type of event can be considered a contact zone in which the people in the North East of England experienced a certain degree of Japanese culture, albeit mediated by methods of presentation employed by each cultural mobiliser. The analysis of these leisure activities has further demonstrated the ambiguous characteristic of the transcultural exchange between Japan and Britain outside of London.

Delivered by scholars and experts, public lectures focused on Japanese themes attempted to offer an accurate picture of contemporary Japan or its history, avoiding explicit references to

⁵⁸⁶ *Shields Daily News*, 29 April 1904, 2; *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 16 April 1904, 1.

⁵⁸⁷ *Blyth News*, 2 January 1912, 2.

⁵⁸⁸ Percy Day, “Whispers from the Wings,” *The Magnet*, 24 September 1904, 5.

⁵⁸⁹ *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 5 April 1909, 1; *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 28 December 1909, 4; *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 22 July 1911, 1. Marie Santoi was the stage name of Mary Power (1879-1924), who came from the Manchester area.

⁵⁹⁰ The story of the *Mousme* was written by Robert Courtneidge and Alexander Thompson, the lyrics was by Percy Greenback and Arthur Wimperis, and the music by Howard Talbot and Lionel Monckton. See, Henry Balme, “Between Modernism and Japonism: The Mousmé and the Cultural Mobility of Musical Comedy,” *Popular Entertainment Studies* 7, no. 1-2 (2016): 6-20.

⁵⁹¹ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 17 February 1912, 7.

⁵⁹² On the contrary, Elizabeth Kramer and Akiko Savas has demonstrated that the early 1910s was a period in which the “Kimono Craze” was at its peak in Britain. Kramer and Savas, “The Kimono Craze,” 190.

an unchanging, romantic vision of “Old” Japan. The end to self-imposed isolation of Japan in 1854 and the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894 represented the two most destabilising moments for the British perception of Japan, stimulating the thirst for further information in the North East, resulting in the organisation of numerous public lectures in order to shed light on this far-flung country. Such a thirst was not exclusively limited to urban centres and from the beginning public lectures about Japan were organised in large towns such as Newcastle, but also rural villages such as Humshaugh. The visual and material aids employed at most of the lectures further confirm the didactic purpose of these types of public events. In the late 1850s and early 1860s, Japanese ethnographic collections were the most common visual aids; while in the mid-1890s, advances in new technologies, visual media such as lantern slides and photographs became a standard. While providing a positive and progressive image of Japan was in most cases a priority – condoning even the Japanese atrocities committed during the war against China –, the racial discourse occasionally re-emerged in the public lectures, reassuring people in the North East that the rise of Japan was not going to threaten the dominant position of the British empire in the near future.

With regard to the public exhibition of Japanese objects, a didactic purpose only appeared in the twentieth century, but prior to that, Japanese artefacts were shown only as exotic curiosities in eclectic displays alongside natural history collections or Western paintings, such as in loan exhibitions organised in mechanics’ institutes throughout the region. Rather than providing detail in regard to the Japanese objects, accounts of these events in local newspapers focused their attention on listing the names of the local donors or lenders. This suggests that the presence of fine and decorative art from Japan was ultimately a marker of distinction for the collector who lent the object, a sign that he or she possessed an eclectic and cosmopolitan taste which testified to the acquisition of what Pierre Bourdieu has called “cultural capital.”

An alternative representation of Japan through visual and material culture emerged at the turn of the century as an indirect response to the Sino-Japanese War and the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. In popular culture events organised in music halls and proto-cinemas, photographs and films about Japan provided a new perspective of the country, whose mere exotic stereotype was partly re-evaluated in favour of what was supposed to be a depiction of contemporary Japanese society. Furthermore, in the early 1910s curators at art galleries and museums in the North East such as the Sunderland Museum and the Laing Art Gallery began to design Japanese exhibitions intended to provide an historical contextualisation to specimens of Japanese artistic

traditions such as *ukiyo-e* prints, paintings, swords, and sets of armours. While succeeding in contrasting the de-historicised representation of Japan, the didactic purpose of these public events did not address the international trade between the country and the North East. Consequently, this curatorial approach implicitly re-affirmed the uneven power relation between the dominant North East and the “surveilled” Japan, allowing the formation of what Tony Bennett describes as the “exhibitionary complex.”

In contrast, Japan-themed spectacles such as acrobatic shows or theatrical plays did not seek to understand the context around contemporary events as they unfolded in a rapidly changing Japan. The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War and the following public reassessment of Japan did not modify the content of such entertaining spectacles, which persisted in depicting an idealised image of Japan, relying on the attraction of the exotic setting and the popular image of the Japanese geisha wearing colourful kimonos. The resulting spectacles further promoted the alluring image of Japan in Britain, associating such ideas not only with Victorian consumer culture at the national level – as exemplified by Tannaker’s touring shows – but also with political satire, as in *The Mikado*, or the alternative standard of feminine beauty portrayed in *The Geisha*.

The common characteristic that brings together these different leisure activities was their role as contact zones between the local communities and Japan. Organised in familiar environments to people in the North East such as cultural institutions, museums, and theatres, these Japan-themed events allowed the local communities to keep abreast of the latest discussion concerning Japan and Japanese culture, inhibiting any sort of cultural isolation in comparison with the other parts of Britain. As this study reveals, the peripheral connotation of the North East became almost insignificant considering that national-scale scholars came to deliver their lectures in most of the local towns, most of the theatrical and acrobatic companies reached the local theatres, and local curators were well-connected with national institutions.

On the other hand, these public events also functioned as sites of contact in which part of the transcultural phenomenon inevitably resulted in commodifying foreign people and reinforcing the dominant position and masculine connotation of the West. Especially regarding acrobatic shows, the presence of native Japanese served to simultaneously consolidate the cosmopolitan connotation of towns such as Newcastle, in which Japanese people were not an uncommon sight, but also bring Japanese performers down to commodifiable entertainments. With regard to theatrical plays, the emphasis on the female actors who embraced Japanese femininity by

wearing kimonos not only further confirm the link between the image of Japan and Victorian consumer culture, providing an ambivalent model for those ladies in the North East interested in selectively embodying part of the exotic “Other,” but it also served to tame the emerging perception of Japan as an aggressive military power, reinforcing its feminine connotation in the eye of the Victorian middle class.

Chapter III: Bazaars and Fairs

Introduction

Beyond public lectures, exhibitions, and entertaining spectacles, the other types of Japan-themed public events in which people in the North East experienced a transcultural encounter with Japan were charity bazaars and fairs. Becoming popular in Britain in the early nineteenth century, the charity bazaar was a temporary fundraising event which relied mainly on voluntary work, generally offered by local ladies, in both organising stalls and supplying each of them with the objects to put on sale.⁵⁹³ The revenue raised in these bazaars served to support a designated cause which might be in aid of hospitals, schools, missionary societies, and religious institutions. In order to attract visitors and supporters, these philanthropic events drew heavily on entertainments, including musicians, dancers, and actors, as well as elaborate decorations following an over-arching theme. Foreign locations were among the most common of these themes, thus for many Victorians attending a charity bazaar provided a chance to have first contact with objects from an exogenous culture. In providing one's first experience with foreign goods and cultural forms, Beverly Gordon has drawn a parallel between the role played by this type of bazaar and world's fairs.⁵⁹⁴

Various scholars have analysed the practice of collecting Japanese artefacts in Britain, and all of them agree on defining the London International Exposition (1862) as the moment at which Japan's artistic tradition in the West received its first popular recognition out of the generic "Orient" label.⁵⁹⁵ As discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, Japanese decorative art was exhibited in an individual pavilion for the first time and attracted the praise and attention of artists, critics, and collectors. In the following decades, Japanese articles were hugely praised in other international exhibitions such as the ones organised in Paris (1867), Vienna (1873), Philadelphia (1876), and Paris again (1878). Even though these public events attracted hundreds of thousands of people, it still does not fully explain the huge popularity of "Japanese things" in regions such as the North East of England. As this chapter suggests, the organisers of charity bazaars and fairs took advantage of the British fascination with Japan promoted in the world's

⁵⁹³ Frank Prochaska, "Charity Bazaars in Nineteenth-Century England," *Journal of British Studies* 16, no. 2 (1977): 62–84.

⁵⁹⁴ Beverly Gordon, *Bazaars and Fair Ladies: The History of the American Fundraising Fair* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1998), 132.

⁵⁹⁵ John MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 124–129; Olive Checkland, *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan, 1868-1912* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 187–195.

fairs, embracing some of their exhibition practices and delivering them in provincial towns as well as in countryside villages.

Drawing upon newspaper articles and archive material, this chapter investigates the ways in which Japan was represented in fairs and charitable bazaars in the North East through the presence and consumption of Japanese goods. Accordingly, the main research question addressed by this chapter is the following: *how did the representation of Japan develop and become more popular in the period under examination?*

To answer, transculturality and the everyday are the main concepts through which public events such as fairs and charitable bazaars are investigated. In contrast to most of other studies – which commonly focus on just one leisure or fundraising activity themed as Japanese –,⁵⁹⁶ this chapter analyses quite a few of them, providing not only an accurate picture about the popularity and geographical diversification of Japan-themed charity bazaars and fairs in the North East, but also proving that the resulting contact zones were not just a mere example of Victoria Orientalism. More specifically, three distinct phases have been identified: from 1867 to 1881, from 1882 to 1894, and from 1895 to 1913. The first phase was characterised by the interest and curiosity in the Japanese articles *per se*; while with regard to the second phase, it is possible to notice how the idealised image of Japan as a pre-modern fairyland became a safe and appropriate environment for hosting a charitable event. Especially in the late 1880s, the transcultural dialogue between Japanese and British cultures demonstrates that even in provincial towns and villages, the idea of Japan became a commodified concept which partially questioned the Japanese “Otherness.” During the third phase, from 1896 to 1913, the number of Japan-themed bazaars dramatically decreased in response to the new role played by Japan on the world stage that undermined the aforementioned idealised image of the East Asian country.

Finally, this chapter will discuss for the first time the interior design aspect of these fundraising events, as well as the relationship between the late nineteenth-century enthusiasm for Japan stirred by International Expositions and the stereotyped representation of Japan in public charity

⁵⁹⁶ Christina Baird, “Japan and Liverpool: James Lord Bowes and his legacy.” *Journal of the History of Collections* 12, no. 1 (2000): 127-137; Amelia Scholtz, “‘Almond-Eyed Artisans’/‘Dishonouring the National Polity’: The Japanese Village Exhibition in Victorian London,” *Japanese Studies* 27, no. 1 (2007): 73-85; Sir Hugh Cortazzi, *Japan in Late Victorian London: The Japanese Native Village in Knightsbridge and The Mikado, 1885* (Norwich: Sainsbury Institute, 2009); K. L. H. Wells, “The ‘Merely Imitative Mood’: British Japonisme and Imperial Mimesis,” *Nineteenth Century Studies* 27 (2013): 143-166.

initiatives organised in bustling cities, peripheral towns, and rural villages in Britain. With this regard, a prominent role was played by cultural mobilisers such as British decorators, who arranged the perfect environment in which a respectable public event such as a charity bazaar could be organised without any risk to result inappropriate. Rather than a mere example of an Orientalist environment, in which the “East/Other” is depicted as a fictional and de-historicised entity “for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient,”⁵⁹⁷ the representation of Japan was also characterised by a creative resistance to the new image of the country with respect to its modernising process, resulting in a phenomenon that simultaneously reinforced and questioned the British dominant position and the imperialistic narrative.

Terminology and Historical Context

In late Victorian Britain, various words were used interchangeably to identify the public event investigated in this chapter, but after the pivotal article by Frank Prochaska,⁵⁹⁸ “charity bazaar” has become the most common in academic publications.⁵⁹⁹ Originally, the term “bazaar” was a Persian word which described a market district which scholars dated back to 3000 BC.⁶⁰⁰ Through the centuries, the word entered into European vocabularies and was associated with both temporary and permanent markets, often used as a synonym for open market-places.

In Britain, the term “bazaar” started to be used with a new meaning in the early nineteenth century. According to Ian Mitchell, the late-Georgian bazaar was located in a permanent premises and could be described as “a large building, often of more than one storey, in which counter space was let for the sale of non-food goods.”⁶⁰¹ The first of this kind was opened by John Trotter in Soho Square, London, in 1816.⁶⁰² Among the various features, Trotter’s Soho Bazaar became popular because of its controlled and respectable environment, as well as for offering accessibility to a wide range of renters, who could take advantage of the daily average of around 2500 visitors.⁶⁰³ If the original idea was to support local individuals unable to open their shops, in practice, most of the counters and stalls were rented by established retailers who

⁵⁹⁷ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1978), 3.

⁵⁹⁸ Prochaska, “Charity Bazaars.”

⁵⁹⁹ The other most common terms are fancy fair, fête, or simply festival.

⁶⁰⁰ Azadeh Arjomand Kermani and Eric Luiten, “The Impact of Modernization on Traditional Iranian Cities: The Case of Kerman,” *Environmental Science and Sustainability* 7, no. 9 (2009): 80.

⁶⁰¹ Ian Mitchell, “Innovation in Non-food Retailing in the Early Nineteenth Century: The Curious Case of the Bazaar,” *Business History* 52, no. 6 (2010): 876.

⁶⁰² Prochaska, “Charity Bazaars,” 63-64.

⁶⁰³ Mitchell, “The Curious Case of the Bazaar,” 880.

used the bazaar as a secondary outlet.⁶⁰⁴ Following Trotter, many other bazaars of this kind were opened all over England, as well as hybrids such as bazaar-markets, where fresh products were sold in covered halls; however, their commercial success waned from the early 1840s and most of them closed by the 1850s.⁶⁰⁵

Various features from the commercial bazaar were almost immediately transposed into its charity counterpart, which became popular in the 1820s. For example, the organisation of each counter space left to single individuals or groups was further developed in the charity bazaar where volunteers provided and sold the objects at their stall in almost complete autonomy. However, crucial differences helped the charity bazaar to avoid the sort of decline that commercial bazaars faced in the second half of the nineteenth century. While a commercial bazaar was permanent and only the stallholders changed over time, a charity bazaar lasted just a couple of days, explaining the reason why in many cases these public events were promoted as entertaining spectacles such as fancy fairs or festivals. In addition, as posited by Sarah Roddy, Julie-Marie Strange and Bertrand Taithe, even if “charitable fundraising could entail the consumption of goods in commercial contexts [...] this was frequently reframed by consumers’ desire to express their compassion while consuming.”⁶⁰⁶ In other words, its ephemeral nature as well as its philanthropic vocation equated the charity bazaar as a social activity which was simultaneously attractive and respectable for a wide range of Victorian people.

Charity bazaars were often decorated in an “Oriental” scheme, related to international and local intentions. A common practice was to organise a bazaar and sell fancy goods manufactured in the country or countries where missionary activities were in progress, in order to support further missions.⁶⁰⁷ Through visual material such as photographs and later even films, British donors were able to buy original foreign products and view on what kind of activities their money

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., 881.

⁶⁰⁵ According to Ian Mitchell, bazaars in general were “economically inefficient but socially valuable” Ibid., 876, 885.

⁶⁰⁶ Sarah Roddy et al., *The Charity Market and Humanitarianism in Britain, 1870–1912* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018), 4.

⁶⁰⁷ Scholars agree that, even if missionary societies understood their activities outside of the imperial interests, they were inextricably bound up with the history of Western imperial activities in Africa, Asia, and elsewhere. Jennifer Morawiecki, “The Peculiar Mission of Christian Womanhood: The Selection and Preparation of Women Missionaries of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, 1880-1920,” PhD Thesis (University of Sussex, 1998), 57-60. See also, Steven Maughan, *Mighty England Do Good: Culture, Faith, Empire, and World in the Foreign Missions of the Church of England, 1850-1915* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2014).

would later be spent.⁶⁰⁸ “Oriental” bazaars were often organised also for smaller and local philanthropic projects, for instance, the building of new chapels, churches, or schools. Another common purpose, at least in the North East of England, was merely covering the debts that local churches contracted during the year. In these cases, there was no discernible link between the purpose of the bazaar, the articles on sale and the decoration of the space. Rather, the fancy goods on the stalls and the decorative scheme represented just a way to attract potential benefactors and enable them to spend their money on a good cause.

As most of the organising of such events was in the hands of wealthy ladies who also contributed with manufactured items, many scholars have emphasised the importance of charity bazaars with regard to women’s emancipation. Prockaska suggests that the structure of charity bazaar “legitimized trade and manual work from which [women] were customarily excluded,” and, more generally, female philanthropy opened the way for other kinds of demands from women such as education, employment, moral reform and the vote.⁶⁰⁹ Dorice Elliott further develops this argument, affirming that “representations of women doing philanthropic work changed the way people conceived of the nature of women, regardless of whether any particular woman engaged in philanthropy.”⁶¹⁰ These aspects were further analysed by Leslee Thorne-Murphy, who underlines the strong link between women’s professionalisation and her participation in charity bazaar endeavours, which cannot be considered mere extensions of her domestic duties, but professional aspirations.⁶¹¹ Overall, it is undeniable that charity bazaars represented one of the first public environments in which middle-class Victorian women were able to express their independence.

Japanese Bazaars and Fairs in the North East of England

As demonstrated in the previous chapters, the North East of England experienced a fascination with Japan with no relevant delay in comparison with the other British regions. From the opening of Japan to the West in 1854 and through to the following decades, a genuine curiosity towards the East Asian country gradually developed into a full-blown Japan mania. This development is also reflected in the character of charity bazaars during the period under

⁶⁰⁸ Sarah Cheang, “‘Our Missionary Wembley’: China, Local Community and The British Missionary Empire, 1901-1924,” *East Asian History*, no. 32/33 (2008): 177-198.

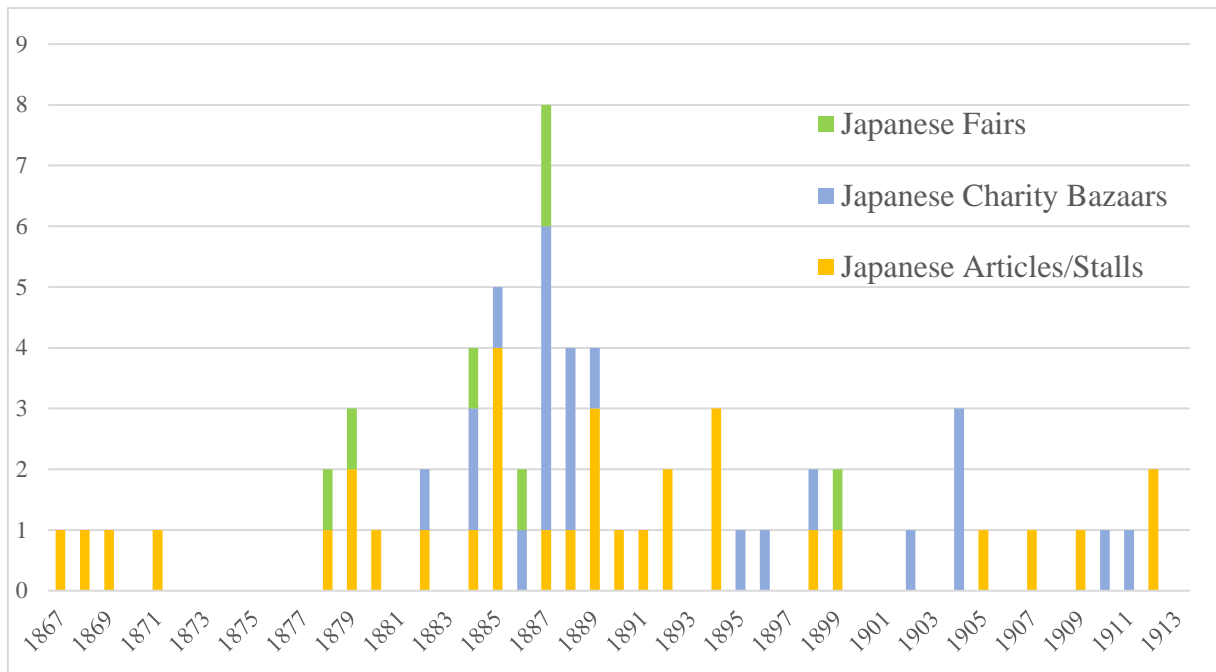
⁶⁰⁹ Frank Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), 71.

⁶¹⁰ Dorice Williams Elliott, *The Angel Out of the House: Philanthropy and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2002) 11.

⁶¹¹ Leslee Thorne-Murphy, “The Charity Bazaar and Women's Professionalization in Charlotte Mary Yonge's *The Daisy*,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 47, no. 4 (2007): 884.

examination, as religious and charitable institutions took advantage of this cultural phenomenon in order to attract benefactors and donors.

Graph 7 - Japanese Bazaars in the North East of England: 1867-1913.



Source: British Newspaper Archive. See Appendix F.

Drawing upon regional newspapers and archive materials related to the period between 1860 and 1913, it has been possible to count 63 bazaars and fairs in which Japanese objects were displayed in the North East of England (Graph 7). The colour-coded graph emphasises the difference between generic charity bazaars in which Japanese manufactured objects were simply displayed and sold together amongst a wider range of material (yellow), charity bazaars which were arranged to resemble a Japanese pre-modern village (blue), and Japan-themed fairs that were noncharitable events (green).

Keeping these crucial distinctions in mind, it is possible to divide the period under examination into three principal phases: from 1867 to 1881, from 1882 to 1894, and from 1895 to 1913. The first begins with the earliest charity bazaar in which a Japanese object is displayed, and it ends after two small Japanese fairs. The second phase is inaugurated by the earliest Japan-themed charity bazaar, which initiated a standardised formula replicated in the following years. The first year of the third phase is linked to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War, which, in contrast to the attention that the conflict sparked in other public events discussed in the previous chapter, while it did not cause a clear decline of Japan-theme charity bazaars, marks a significant fall in the presence of Japanese goods available at generic charitable events.

Before analysing each phase in detail, it is worth providing some general observations. The characteristic of the charity bazaars organised in the North East in which Japanese goods were on display reflect what Prochaska has suggested concerning British peripheral regions, in which the majority of charity bazaars were organised in aid of churches and chapels, while in London the recipients were more diverse, including hospitals, schools, and missionary societies.⁶¹² Drawing from local newspapers, it is possible to confirm the validity of Prochaska's assertion with respect to the North East, where from 1860 to 1913, around 75% of charity bazaars exhibiting Japanese objects were organised in support of local religious institutions.

Another general aspect to underline is the provenance of the Japanese objects displayed. Drawing upon the limited amount of information provided by newspaper articles, it is possible to suggest that most of the Japanese goods up for sale had a local origin. Traditionally, charity bazaars raised money through entrance fees and by selling goods manufactured by local benefactors. In the case of Japanese objects, the stallholders might donate their personal collection of Japanese decorative articles for sale, as it was testified by the call for donations to furnish a "China and Japanese Stall" at the Sunderland Infirmary Annual Sale of Work in 1885.⁶¹³ Benefactors could also purchase Japanese objects from local retailers. For example, stallholders were encouraged to purchase specimens of Japanese manufacture for bazaars by local retailers such as J. Taylor in Sunderland, who published an advertisement stating as such in 1881 (Figure 25). Very occasionally, as was the case with the Church Missionary Society bazaar organised in Durham in 1879, Japanese articles for sale might be imported directly from Japan.⁶¹⁴

⁶¹² Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, 52-53.

⁶¹³ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 29 October 1885, 2.

⁶¹⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 30 May 1879, 4.

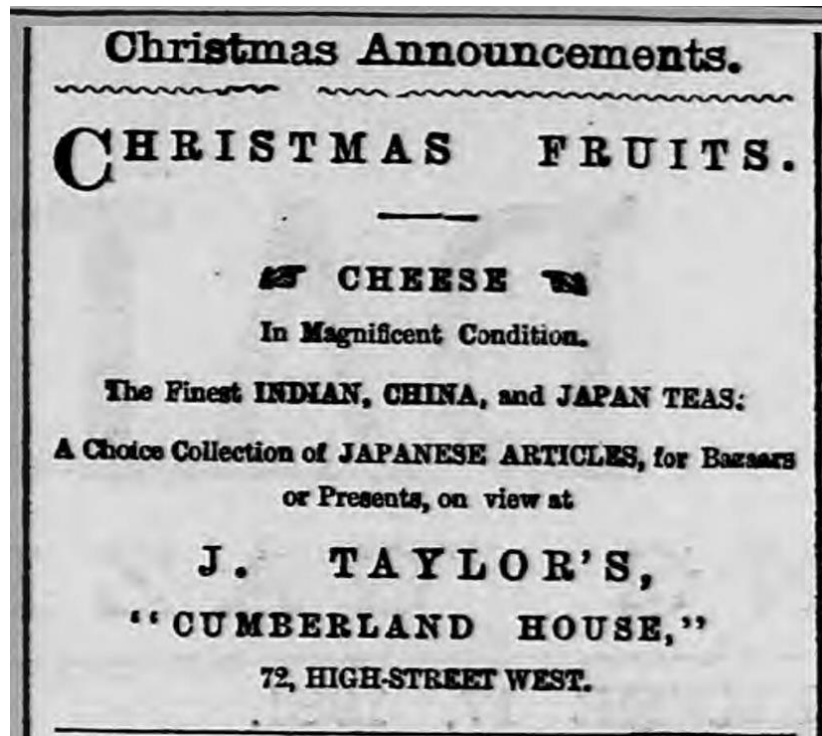


Figure 25 - J. Taylor, Sunderland, *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 17 December 1881, 2.

1867-1881

The period between 1867 and 1881 is characterized by the predominance of generic charity bazaars in which Japanese objects were sold, or just displayed as exotic curiosities in order to attract a curious audience in both towns and villages (Table 1). After the first one in Sunderland in 1867,⁶¹⁵ bazaars were organised in Morpeth in 1868,⁶¹⁶ Newcastle in 1869,⁶¹⁷ and Cramlington in 1871.⁶¹⁸ The latter in particular demonstrates that even the people of a mining town had the chance to admire “a Japanese cabinet, and other specimens of the handicraft of that distant land.”⁶¹⁹ In general, newspaper articles highlighted aspects concerning the rarity or novelty of Japanese objects such as a “varied collection of Japanese flags,”⁶²⁰ or “a picture painted in Japan on Japanese silk, subject ‘Lady of the period’;”⁶²¹ but also the quality of luxury goods such as Japanese cabinets,⁶²² or Japanese pottery.⁶²³

⁶¹⁵ Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 23 April 1867, 3.

⁶¹⁶ Newcastle Journal, 30 July 1868, 2.

⁶¹⁷ Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 1 April 1869, 3.

⁶¹⁸ Morpeth Herald, 15 April 1871, 2.

⁶¹⁹ Morpeth Herald, 15 April 1871, 2.

⁶²⁰ Morpeth in 1868, Newcastle Journal, 30 July 1868, 2.

⁶²¹ Newcastle in 1869, Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 1 April 1869, 3.

⁶²² Sunderland in 1867, Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 23 April 1867, 4; Cramlington in 1871, Morpeth Herald, 15 April 1871, 2.

⁶²³ Darlington in 1878, Northern Echo, 15 October 1878, 3-4.

Table 1 – Number of Charity Bazaars and/or fairs in Towns throughout the North East of England, 1867-1913.

Town	1867-1881	1882-1894	1895-1913	TOTAL
Newcastle	2	6	2	10
Sunderland	2	6	1	9
Darlington	1	3	2	6
Durham	1	3	-	4
Barnard Castle	1	-	-	1
Castle Eden	1	-	-	1
Cramlington	1	-	-	1
Morpeth	1	-	-	1
Cullercoats	-	1	-	1
South Shields	-	1	2	3
Berwick	-	1	1	2
Hexham	-	1	1	2
Stanhope	-	2	-	2
Tynemouth	-	2	-	2
Willington Quay	-	1	1	2
Alnwick	-	1	-	1
Blyth	-	1	-	1
Gateshead	-	1	-	1
Loftus	-	1	-	1
Middlesbrough	-	1	-	1
Ryton	-	1	-	1
Seaham	-	1	-	1
Shildon/Old Shildon	-	1	-	1
Spennymoor	-	1	-	1
Bishop Auckland	-	-	1	1
Ashington	-	-	1	1
Hartlepool	-	-	3	3
North Shields	-	-	1	1
Whitley Bay	-	-	1	1
TOTAL	10	36	17	63

Source: British Newspaper Archive. See Appendix F.

The first charity bazaar organised in the region which saw the presence of Japanese objects was in aid of the Sunderland New General Hospital and was dated in 1867. A newspaper article lists “a magnificent and costly collection of Chinese and Japanese curiosities, & c., including vases, tea and coffee services, carved stone dessert services, Japanese cabinets, [...]”⁶²⁴ The donors were Messrs Brough, the owners of a company that imported tea, based in Sunderland. Three months after the bazaar, they advertised the sale of art objects directly imported from China, including a “magnificent Japanese cabinet” for the price of 45 guineas.⁶²⁵ It is possible that for the Messrs Brough, lending, or put on sale part of their collection was not only a way to convey distinction but also to make an indirect reference to their main business and promote their shop.

As discussed in the previous chapter regarding Japanese public exhibitions, displaying Japanese objects distinguished the people who lent or donated them. However, this practice changed in the late 1870s. At that time, newspaper articles began to undermine the appeal of Japanese objects *per se*, which went from being labelled exotic curiosities to fancy goods. In Darlington, for example, specimens of Japanese pottery were mentioned in parallel with a set of “miscellaneous goods, from dolls to [...] portraits.”⁶²⁶ As the quality of items declined and quantity of items increased, the names of donors stopped being reported in relation to each Japanese object donated.⁶²⁷ This transformation can be understood in relation to the increasing accessibility to Japanese manufactured objects as time passed. As discussed in the next chapter, purchasing Japanese goods in the North East became easier as the number of local retailers selling Japanese objects dramatically increased from the mid-1870s. Thus, possessing and donating objects manufactured in Japan was probably considered less exceptional in comparison to the previous decade.

The late 1870s was also the period in which the use of terms such as “Japanese fair” and “Japanese fete” are documented for the first time, marking also the moment when Japan began to be staged for the first time as a visual spectacle. Such public events shared various elements in common with contemporary acrobatic shows, suggesting how fine the line was between

⁶²⁴ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 23 April 1867, 3.

⁶²⁵ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 23 July 1867, 1. As tea importers, it is plausible that the Japanese articles came through the same network of agents that the company had in China, however, there are no clear evidence to support this assumption.

⁶²⁶ *Northern Echo*, 15 October 1878, 3.

⁶²⁷ Darlington in 1878, *Northern Echo*, 15 October 1878, 3-4; Barnard Castle in 1879, *Northern Echo*, 27 August 1879, 3; Castle Eden in 1880, *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 14 September 1880, 3.

different entertainments. The “Japanese Fete,” was a spectacle brought to Newcastle in 1878 by a Scottish company founded by Charles Hangler, who owned a circus in Glasgow. Executed by more than 100 performers, including acrobats and dancers, the show is described in newspapers as a “Grand Oriental Spectacle” staged in seven scenes or, as the advert calls them, “tableaux.”⁶²⁸ Unfortunately, no details are provided with regard to these “tableaux” but the presence of Chinese lanterns testifies that the label “Japanese” was used here in a more generic “Oriental” connotation.⁶²⁹ The same conflation between China and Japan occurred in Sunderland the following year, when at the Theatre Royal a variety show was staged. The list of performances and spectacles included the exhibition of Japanese and Chinese views, one of which was named “Japanese Fair”; while the others “Hong Kong” and “Pekin.”⁶³⁰ The presence in these two shows of elaborate and realistic staging techniques and scenic effects suggests that the spectacularisation of Japanese culture, which was later developed in Japan-themed bazaars in the North East, was anticipated by these two entertaining spectacles.

1882-1894

Elizabeth Aslin has argued that the 1880s was the decade in which the fascination with Japan became part of British popular culture.⁶³¹ This phenomenon was also evident with regard to the organisation of public events such as charity bazaars and fairs in the North East of England. Accordingly, the period between 1882 and 1894 was characterised by the emergence of charity bazaars and fairs in which the decorations aimed to resemble a pre-modern Japanese Village. At the same time, Japanese objects could also be found in other types of bazaars. The number of Japanese articles and stalls in generic bazaars increased from 8 to 17 during this period, and it became increasingly common to find Japanese articles in charity events organised by local churches,⁶³² missionary organisations,⁶³³ or in aid of other institutions such as the Aged Female Society of Newcastle in 1885.⁶³⁴

⁶²⁸ *Newcastle Journal*, 3 June 1878, 2.

⁶²⁹ *Newcastle Courant*, 1 May 1878, 5.

⁶³⁰ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 7 April 1879, 1.

⁶³¹ Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Nouveau* (London: Elek, 1969), 79.

⁶³² A charity bazaar in St. Oswald’s Church, Durham, *Newcastle Courant*, 15 December 1882, 5; “Egyptian Fair and Bazaar” in St. Thomas’ Church in Sunderland, *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 14 September 1880, 3.

⁶³³ A bazaar in aid of Church Missionary Society held in Durham, *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough*, 10 June 1885, 3

⁶³⁴ *Newcastle Courant*, 6 November 1885, 2.

As in earlier years, charity bazaars offering Japanese articles were organised in both towns and villages (Table 1). Even if most of them were located in Tyne and Wear,⁶³⁵ bazaars were also organised in the other parts of the region: from the North⁶³⁶ to the South⁶³⁷, from the coast⁶³⁸ to the countryside.⁶³⁹ Between 1882 and 1894, only the largest centres of the region such as Newcastle, Sunderland, Durham, and Darlington saw more than two events, with the exception of Middlesbrough. Considering the strong link between the town on the Tees and Japan, it may sound an unexpected result. However, considering that this trade relationship flourished in the late 1890s, it is plausible that the appeal of Japan among the local community was not so strong in the previous decade.

With regard to the perception of Japanese imported articles in generic bazaars, it is also possible to observe a further shift in the 1890s. As discussed, Japanese objects began to be described mostly as fancy goods in the late 1870s and early 1880s. From the late 1880s, instead, they started to be only mentioned as elements of the event's interior decorations rather than as articles for sale. For example, in the charity bazaar organised in Blyth, Japanese lanterns were exclusively discussed in relation to the decorative scheme.⁶⁴⁰ In the 1890s, this aspect was further developed to the point that in Spennymoor a "Japanese Tea Room" was arranged but no Japanese articles were mentioned explicitly to be on sale.⁶⁴¹ Again, in order to explain this transformation, it should be pointed that Japanese imports became ubiquitous. As a result, promoting generic bazaars in newspapers by mentioning the presence of Japanese articles on sale became largely moot as they were widely available in almost every specialised shop in the North East.

While Japanese objects increasingly lost their attractivity, charity bazaars arranged as traditional Japanese villages became prominent. In those public events, it was the decorative apparatus rather than the Japanese objects on sale that was used to attract a wider audience. The general setting of the "Japanese Village" can be traced back to the Japan Pavilion at the

⁶³⁵ Ryton, *Newcastle Courant*, 26 September 1891, 3; Gateshead, *Newcastle Courant*, 25 November, 5; Tynemouth, *Newcastle Courant*, 24 June 1887, 5; South Shields, *Newcastle Courant*, 17 September 1892, 8; and Willington Quay, *Jarrow Express*, 28 June 1889, 6.

⁶³⁶ Berwick Upon Tweed, *Alnwick Mercury*, 1 August 1885, 1.

⁶³⁷ Middlesbrough, *Northern Echo*, 30 October 1889, 1; Loftus, *York Herald*, 22 September 1888, 6.

⁶³⁸ Blyth, *Morpeth Herald*, 5 January 1889, 2.

⁶³⁹ Hexham, *Newcastle Courant*, 6 June 1884, 5; Morpeth, *Newcastle Journal*, 30 July 1868, 2; Barnard Castle, *Northern Echo*, 27 August 1879, 3.

⁶⁴⁰ *Morpeth Herald*, 5 January 1889, 1.

⁶⁴¹ *Newcastle Courant*, 15 October 1892, 3.

International Exhibition held in Vienna in 1873, in which the Japanese government built also a model of the five-story pagoda at Yanaka Tenno-ji temple and re-created a traditional garden with a Shinto shrine (Figure 26-Figure 28). As discussed by Christine Baird, the Meiji officials hoped the garden:

would catch the essence of such stalls in Japan and give the visitors a glimpse of something quintessentially Japanese, something that in its simplicity and purity captured the character of religious buildings in Japan.⁶⁴²



Figure 26 - Japanese Garden in the Vienna International Exposition, 1873. Photograph. Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo.

⁶⁴² Christina Baird, "British Ceramic Collections at the Vienna Weltausstellung 1873: Some British and American Visitors' Perspectives with Comparative Comments on the Japanese Ceramic Display," *Journal of the History of Collections* 26, no. 1 (2014), 80.



Figure 27 - Japanese Garden in the Vienna International Exposition, 1873. Photograph. Tokyo National Museum, Tokyo.

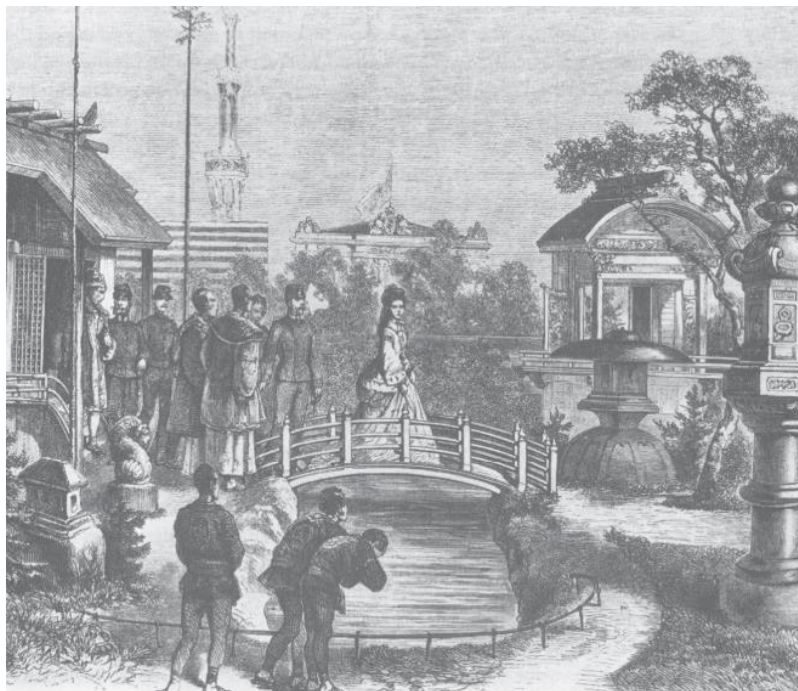


Figure 28 – Franz Kollarz, Emperor Franz Joseph and Empress Elisabeth visiting the Japanese Garden, 1873. *Land und Meer* 15, no 40 (1873).

Impressed as the other visitors, Christopher Dresser purchased the structures of the Japanese garden at the end of the International Exposition and in 1875 re-erected them in London at Alexandra Park, as well as bringing over the “entire Japanese colony” from Vienna.⁶⁴³ The resulting “Japanese Village” (Figure 29-Figure 30) appealed to the British thirst for the curious and exotic, in line with Dresser’s idea of Japanese aesthetics. As suggested by Anna Jackson, the Scottish designer reflected an “escapist longing by those coming to terms with the complexities of life in the industrialised West.”⁶⁴⁴ Satisfying these escapist feelings by fabricating “Old” Japan became the aim of various British companies of decorators which took inspiration from the “Japanese Village” to arrange charity bazaars all over Britain.

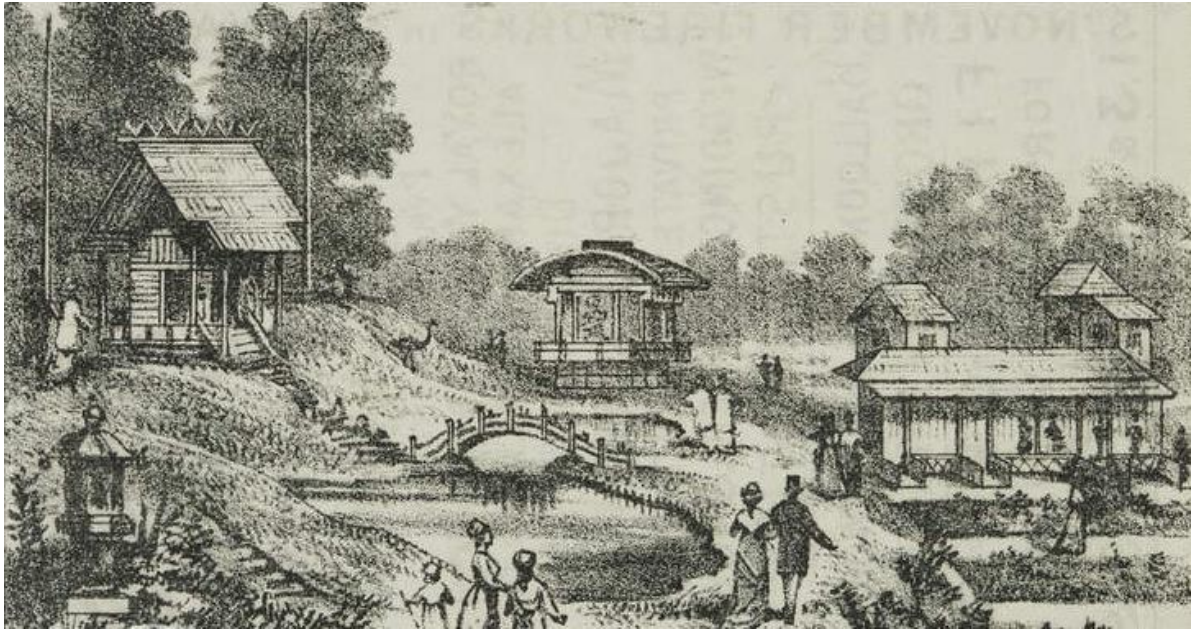


Figure 29 - The Japanese Village at Alexandra Palace, 1875. London Metropolitan Archives, London. Granger Entertainments: SC_GL_ENT_079F.

⁶⁴³ Cortazzi, *Japan in Late Victorian London*, 3; Toshio Watanabe, “The Modern Japanese Garden,” *Since Meiji: Perspectives on the Japanese Visual Arts, 1868-2000*, edited by Thomas Rimer (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2011), 348; Widar Halén, *Christopher Dresser: A Pioneer of Modern Design* (London: Phaidon Press, 1993), 131.

⁶⁴⁴ Anna Jackson, “Imagining Japan: The Victorian Perception and Acquisition of Japanese Culture,” *Journal of Design History* 5, no. 4 (1992): 250.

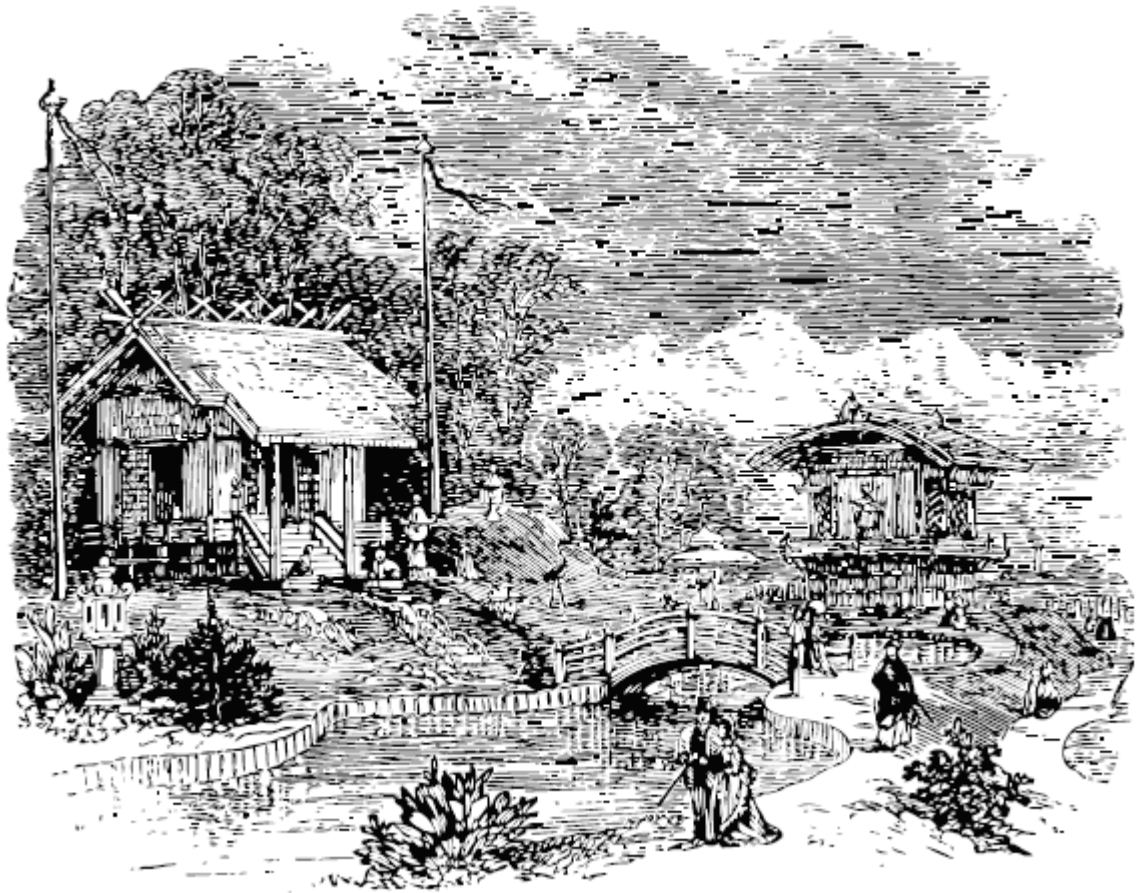


Figure 30 - The Japanese Village at Alexandra Park, 1875. *The Official Guide to the Alexandra Palace and Park*, 1875, 2.

In the North East of England, the first “Japanese Village” bazaar was probably organised in Darlington in 1882,⁶⁴⁵ but it was during the second half of the 1880s and beginning of the 1890s that Japan-themed bazaars became very popular.⁶⁴⁶ The “Japanese Bazaar” in Darlington was arranged by a company of decorators named Womersley. The company was based at 49-53 St. James Street in Leeds and worked around Britain, from Bath, to Manchester, to Belfast.⁶⁴⁷ In a pamphlet detailing their services, they described themselves as decorators for public events, highlighting the illumination of public buildings including by the use of Japanese lanterns

⁶⁴⁵ Darlington in 1882, *Newcastle Courant*, 27 October 1882, 5.

⁶⁴⁶ *Durham County Advertiser*, 30 May 1884, 8; Berwick in 1885, *Alnwick Mercury*, 1 August 1885, 1; Alnwick in 1886, *Durham County Advertiser*, 28 May 1886, 3; Newcastle in 1886, Marie Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England: From 1862 to the Present Day* (London: Athlone Press, 1989), 67; Darlington in 1887, *Northern Echo*, 15 October 1887, 1; Sunderland in 1887, *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 15 December 1887, 4; Gateshead in 1887, *Newcastle Courant*, 25 November, 5; Seaham in 1887, *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 3 May 1887, 3; Loftus in 1888, *Daily Gazette of Middlesbrough*, 20 September 1888, 3; Shildon in 1888, *Northern Echo*, 1 December 1888, 1; Stanhope in 1888, *Newcastle Courant*, 6 April 1888, 5.

⁶⁴⁷ Womersley & Co. Leeds, c.1892, DC ITT 26/87, *Teesside Archives*.

(Figure 31-Figure 32). In Darlington, they were able to fit up the local Central Hall with “the representations of Japanese architecture” described as “perfect and [...] tasteful.”⁶⁴⁸ Unfortunately, the newspaper articles does not provide further details, however, taking into consideration that Womersley affirmed in an advertisement published the previous year that they were able to arrange a “Japanese Village” (Figure 33), it is more than plausible that the bazaar in Darlington was fitted up with the intention to resemble (directly, or indirectly) the prototype Dresser arranged at Alexandra Park, which consisted of a couple of Japanese-style buildings and a bridge.



Figure 31 - Womersley & Co. Leeds, c.1892. DC ITT 26/87. Teesside Archives, Middlesbrough.



Figure 32 - Womersley & Co. Leeds, c.1892. Detail.

⁶⁴⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 27 October 1882, 5.

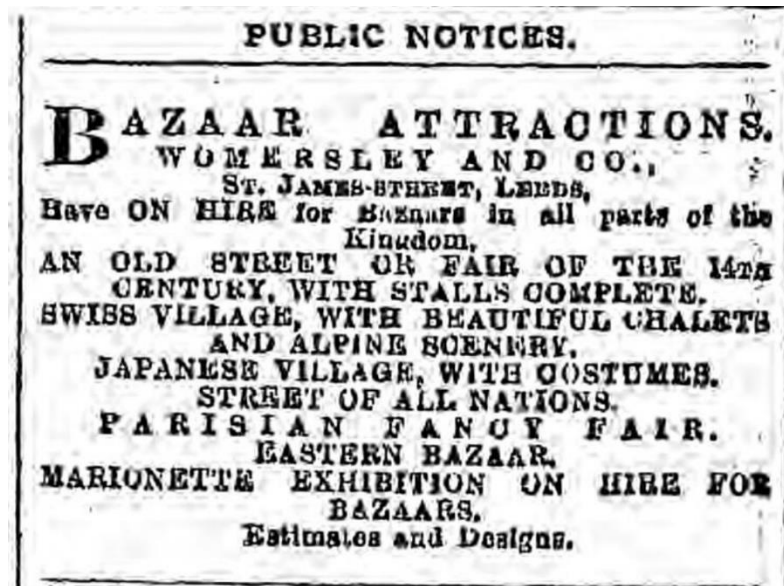


Figure 33 - Womersley's Advertisement. *Northern Echo*, 29 October 1881, 1.

With regard to Japan-themed bazaars, Womersley canonised a formula which the company of decorators followed throughout the decade. The main characteristics of this decorative scheme included stalls named after Japanese towns, the reconstruction of a pagoda, and a fake bridge in the middle of the room, which seem to directly reference the Japanese Village arranged by Dresser. The charity bazaars arranged in the North East by Womersley in the 1880s replicated almost slavishly this display, as evidenced by the Mikado Festival in Darlington in 1887 and in Middlesbrough in 1889.⁶⁴⁹

In 1887 the decorators from Leeds were called back to Darlington to arrange the “Mikado Festival and Feast of Lanterns.” Organised at the Central Hall in 1887 – in connection with the United Methodist Free Church –, the main object of the “Mikado Festival” was to erase the debts of the local Paradise Chapel and collect funds to build a new Sunday School. Although no photographs of the Mikado Festival survive, it is possible to imagine how the bazaar was arranged from the official guide and articles reporting on the event (Figure 34).

⁶⁴⁹ Darlington, *Northern Eco*, 20 October 1887, 8; Middlesbrough, *Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough*, 12 November 1889, 3.

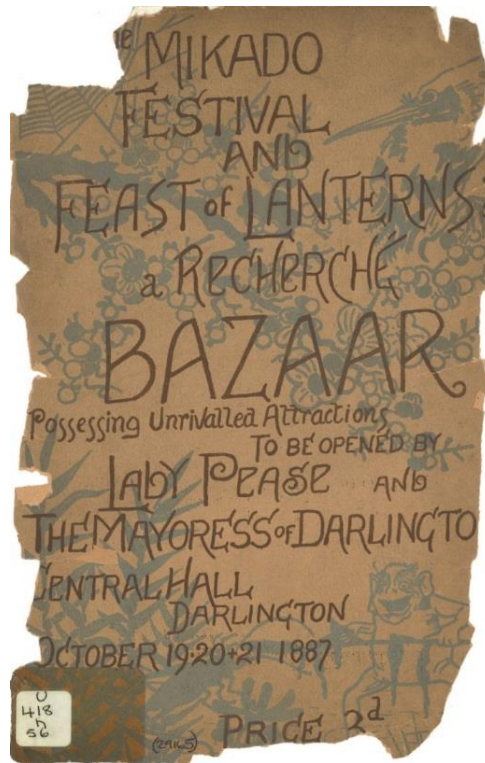


Figure 34 – Cover. William Dresser. *The Mikado Festival and Feast of Lanterns: a Recherche Bazaar, October 19, 20 and 21 1887*, 1887. U418h56. Darlington Centre for Local Studies, Darlington.

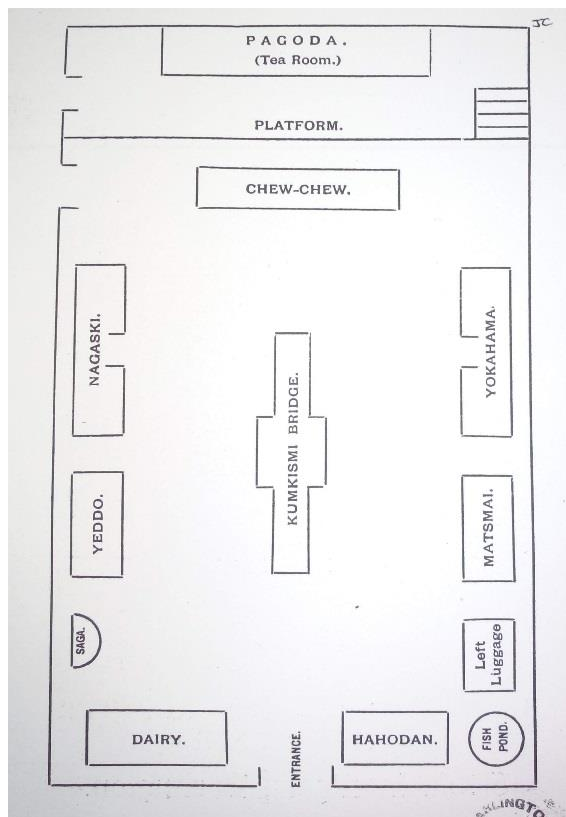


Figure 35 – Map. Dresser, *The Mikado Festival and Feast of Lanterns*, 1887.

Produced by a local publisher and lithographer named William Dresser, the guide of the bazaar includes the floorplan (Figure 35) and a detailed description of the arrangement:

The bazaar represents a Japanese village during the feast of lanterns. [...] The stalls are arranged in the form of Japanese houses or cottages of varied construction, most elaborately decorated, and include many quaint drawings for which Japan is famous. Overhead a canopy of lanterns, novel in shape and profuse with colour, which adds materially to the scenic effects. At the top of the room stands the temple, with its immense pagoda, 40 ft. high, and is surrounded on either side with enchanting scenery of the Land of the rising Sun. The front of the pagoda is bright with gold while the supporting columns give the building a substantial and magnificent appearance. In the centre of the hall is a correct representation of the Sacred Bridge of Kumkismi Gardens, all bright with colour and emblazoned with lanterns of diversified shape and beauty.⁶⁵⁰

The Japanese lanterns mentioned so often in this description were probably the same ones depicted in the bazaar guide (Figure 36). These lanterns are decorated with birds and flowers motifs are accompanied by a gourd-shaped one elaborated with Japanese characters. The multiple inaccuracies suggest that they were copied from another original source with no intention of accurate recreation, however, some of the Japanese characters or part of them can be actually identified.⁶⁵¹



Figure 36 – Dresser, *The Mikado Festival and Feast of Lanterns*, 1887. Detail.

⁶⁵⁰ William Dresser, *The Mikado Festival and Feast of Lanterns: a recherche bazaar, October 19, 20 and 21 1887*. U418h56, Darlington Centre for Local Studies.

⁶⁵¹ The bottom left looks similar to hiragakana ‘se’ せ; while the last on the second line from the left, could resemble the kanji of ‘bow’ 弓 (yumi).

The Mikado Festival, however, was not an indiscriminate amassing of Japanese things, on the contrary, it should be associated with the way in which the stereotyped “Old” Japan was represented. According to the *Northern Echo*:

[the] ornamentation of the front of the temple is very chaste, and being in golden hue, it presents a most brilliant a finished appearance. Grapes cluster in profusion around the front. This is a characteristic feature in Japanese architecture, no as [sic] to hide the otherwise bare aspect of the buildings.⁶⁵²

The *York Herald* confirms the same impression, praising the decorators for having “fitted up the bazaar in truly Japanese style.”⁶⁵³ The sensation of being in Japan was then the result of the decorators’ attempt to arrange a display which would appear “authentic” to individuals such as newspaper reporters and visitors who had limited familiarity with the country at that time, but were acquaintanced with the de-historicised image of Japan. In a manner alike the travel literature authors discussed in previous chapters, this quest for “authenticity” turned away from visual references to Japanese urban culture – in which Western presence was becoming increasingly common – to focus on yet “untouched” rural settings.

The numerous illustrations included in the official guide reveal even more about the image of Japan that was intended to be represented. Throughout the publication, there is a profusion of decorative elements traditionally associated with an idealised Japan. The cover itself is the best example: along with an egret with retracted neck, and stylised bamboo leaves, cherry or plum blossoms and a generic little monster from Japanese folklore are included (Figure 37-Figure 40). This dream-like vision of Japan strongly contrasts with the country that at the end of the 1880s, in which a rapid modernising process was well underway. Following the Meiji Restoration in 1869, Japan began to adopt Western political, social and economic organisation and technological innovations and this transformation was perceived as a threat to the “fairylend” so appreciated in Britain, as discussed by Yokoyama Toshio.⁶⁵⁴ In other words, the idealised “Old” Japan persisted in being represented in order to keep the East Asian country as similar as possible to the pre-modern vision that corresponded with Victorian desires.

⁶⁵² *Northern Eco*, 20 October 1887, 8.

⁶⁵³ *York Herald*, 22 October 1887, 3.

⁶⁵⁴ Toshio Yokoyama, *Japan in the Victorian Mind: A Study of Stereotyped Images of a Nation, 1850-80* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987), 170-175.



Figure 37 – Cover. Dresser, *The Mikado Festival and Feast of Lanterns*. 1887. Detail.



Figure 38 - Cover. Dresser, *The Mikado Festival and Feast of Lanterns*. 1887. Detail.

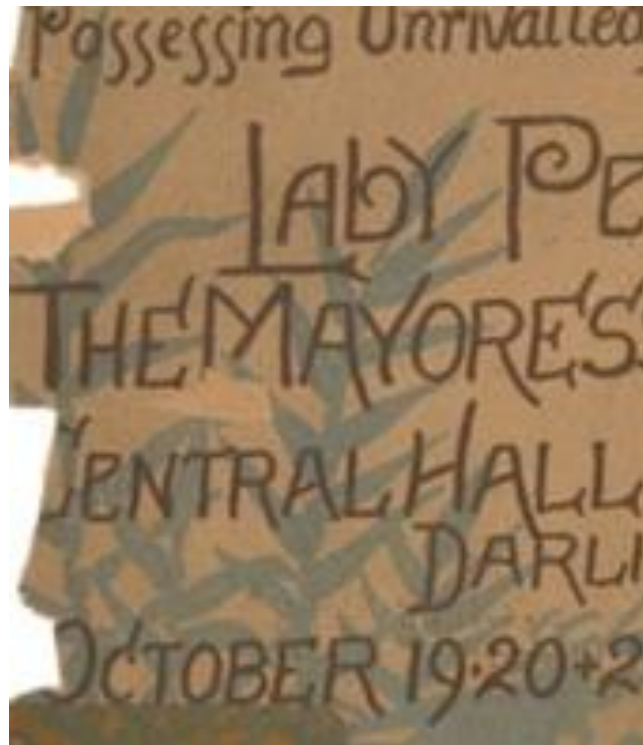


Figure 39 - Cover. Dresser, *The Mikado Festival and Feast of Lanterns*. 1887. Detail.



Figure 40 - Cover. Dresser, *The Mikado Festival and Feast of Lanterns*. 1887. Detail.

In addition to satisfying their desire for exoticism, people in the North East felt themselves transported to Japan upon entering the Darlington Central Hall. As a local newspaper enthusiastically commented, “it was at first difficult to conceive that it was the Central Hall, so

completely had it been transformed to resemble a Japanese village.”⁶⁵⁵ This way of looking resemble what John Urry calls the “tourist gaze,” which:

is directed to features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience. Such aspects are viewed because they are taken to be in some sense out of the ordinary. [...] People linger over such gaze which is then normally visually objectified or captured through photographs, postcards, films, models and so on. These enable the gaze to be endlessly reproduced and recaptured.⁶⁵⁶

With regard to the Mikado Festival, the “gaze” was rather captured through the constellation of elements related to the British fascination with Japan, which Womersley was able to convincingly reproduce not only by displaying Japanese decorative objects such as lanterns, but also by incorporating Japanese traditional houses and a pagoda. Taking into consideration that for Urry, “places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation, especially through daydreaming and fantasy,”⁶⁵⁷ it is no surprise that such arrangement was so highly praised even though it contrasted with the image of the country which at that time was purchasing warships and pig iron from the North East. That this “Orientalist” vision of Japan persisted until the very end of the nineteenth century further demonstrates how deep-rooted it was in the minds of people in the North East of England, aware as they might well have been that from the mid-1880s, Japanese engineers as well as naval officers and crews became a not-uncommon sight in the region.⁶⁵⁸

In line with the other charitable events in Britain, the Mikado Festival was run by local volunteers, mainly ladies, who put on sale the works they produced, or simply bought for the occasion.⁶⁵⁹ While the decorative scheme was overtly Japanese, the origin of the articles on sale at each stall was mainly local, eliciting a transcultural dialogue between the Japanese and local culture. In the “Nagaski [sic]” and Yokohama stalls, for example, specimens of embroidery works were the main articles on sale, and in both cases, the guide underlines how they were the result of “hard labour” of the local ladies.⁶⁶⁰ Indian trays and vases, Russian leather cases, and Dresden ceramics were also available and provided an atmosphere of cosmopolitanism. A few Japanese items were displayed in the Matsmai stall, however, even in that booth, other articles

⁶⁵⁵ *Northern Eco*, 20 October 1887, 8.

⁶⁵⁶ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, second edition (London: Sage Publications, 2002), 3.

⁶⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁶⁵⁸ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 32.

⁶⁵⁹ Prochaska, “Charity Bazaars,” 83.

⁶⁶⁰ William Dresser, *The Mikado Festival and Feast of Lanterns: a Recherche Bazaar, October 19, 20 and 21 1887*. U418h56, Darlington Centre for Local Studies. Unfortunately, the guide does not reveal whether the embroideries incorporated elements which might be considered in Japanese styles.

such as dolls and “London Novelties” represented the main attractions, according to the local newspaper.⁶⁶¹ The *Northern Echo* reporter writes briefly of a Japanese pottery stall not mentioned in the guide, which could imply that it was a last minute addition.

By displaying British and international goods in a Japan-themed setting, local stallholders took advantage of the popularity of Japan to attract visitors. As suggested in *The Lady's Bazaar & Fancy Fair Book*, employing Japanese decorative objects such as fans and parasol added an artistic appearance to the stall which enhanced the goods for sale.⁶⁶² In the Mikado Festival, this effect was taken to a whole other level considering that the bazaar in its entirety was decorated with Japanese articles, which were strongly associated with beauty and refined taste by artists, designers and intellectuals close to the Aesthetic Movement. In her discussion of the presence of Japanese textiles side by side with Victorian women’s needlework at charity bazaars, Elizabeth Kramer identifies that in this “dynamic artistic exchange [...] Japanese wares mediated technical, stylistic and formal lessons for art embroidery.”⁶⁶³ From the opposite perspective, by associating mundane products with Japanese objects, the latter inevitably saw their exoticism partly naturalised in the eye of the visitor. Accordingly, in the Mikado Festival each stall became a contact zone in which a transcultural dialogue between the Japanese and local culture occurred.

While there are no documents attesting that Womersley invented this decorative formula in the early 1880s, other decorators loosely followed this model multiple times in both urban and rural areas, and, as a result, a diverse range of people in the North East – and probably beyond – experienced this same stereotyped image of Japan. For example, Carnegie from Newcastle and Messrs Bridges from King's Lynn, Norfolk, arranged various Japan-themed bazaars with stalls named after Japanese towns, similarly to what Womersley had done.⁶⁶⁴ In December 1888, Carnegie arranged two bazaars: the first in Shildon, and the other outside of the region, in Nenthead, Cumbria. The former was organised inside the Primitive Methodist School and followed the popular formula of representing “a Japanese village on one of its fete days, with its houses, shops, stalls, pagodas [...], with numberless lamps, lanterns, and emblems of the

⁶⁶¹ *Northern Echo*, 20 October 1887, 8.

⁶⁶² *The Lady's Bazaar & Fancy Fair Book* (London: Ward, Lock & Co., 1875) 23.

⁶⁶³ Elizabeth Kramer, “Re-evaluating the Japan Mania in Victorian Britain: The Agency of Japanese and Anglo-Japanese Wares,” *Networks of Design: Proceedings of the 2008 Annual International Conference of the Design History Society*, edited by Johnathan Glynne, Fiona Hackney and Viv Minton (Boca Raton, Florida: Universal Publisher, 2009), 173.

⁶⁶⁴ *Durham County Advertiser*, 30 May 1884, 8.

country.”⁶⁶⁵ Each stall was named after a Japanese town. Three weeks later, Carnegie arranged a second bazaar in Nenthead which was described as “elaborately decorated with Japanese trophies.” A newspaper article reports the positive reaction of the local visitors:

The expression of satisfaction at the appearance of the place was constantly heard amongst the assembled throng, and certainly the beautifully worked lanterns, the exquisite fans, and the many and varied samples of Japanese handicraft presented a very unique appearance.⁶⁶⁶

Having been arranged within such a short time from each other, and by the same firm, it is reasonable to assume that both bazaars shared further decorative elements beyond those mentioned in the articles. Furthermore, it is fundamental to emphasise that even for decorators based in the North East it was common practice to work in other regions, and for this reason they should not be considered exclusively as followers of national and global trends, but also active interpreters and promoters in their own right. The fact that North East decorators as well as decorators from outside the region set up a similar display further reinforces a unified vision of Japan in which the exotic setting served to relieve one’s escapist feelings. This close study of the Japan-themed bazaars held in the North East of England, demonstrates just how widespread they were, in towns and villages alike throughout this and other regions.

To conclude the analysis of Japan-related bazaars and fairs organised in the North East from 1882 to 1894, their dramatic increase in the second half of the 1880s seems quite removed from the international trade relationship between Japan and the North East centred on guns, ships, iron, and coal (Graph 7). The commercial relationship between the Japanese government and shipyards in the North East, which flourished from the middle of the 1880s, was only occasionally directly mentioned at such events. As highlighted later in this chapter, the only exception occurred during the opening speech of the Japanese Village Fair in Newcastle in 1887, when the local mayor linked the thriving, international trade between Japan and the North East as a further motivation to visit the fair and learn something about Japanese traditions. In the other bazaars and fairs organised in the region, no one mentioned something directly related to that economic matter, corroborating the theory that a conflation between “Old” and “New” Japan was in general avoided.

⁶⁶⁵ *Northern Echo*, 6 December 1888, 4.

⁶⁶⁶ *Hexham Courant*, 5 January 1889, 5.

It can be speculated that, especially in the context of a charity bazaar linked to religious and philanthropic purposes, political and economic subjects could have been considered inappropriate topics to discuss. As “Old Japan” was an idealised fairyland removed from any sort of geopolitical change, it represented a safe and respectable environment for hosting a charity bazaar. At the same time, by reaffirming the Japanese connection to the beautiful and timelessness the dominant position of the British Empire was implicitly reassured and, as Antoinette Burton suggests, it also naturalised the potential dichotomy between the “imperial” and the “domestic.”⁶⁶⁷

The reason for the increase of Japan-themed charity bazaars in the late 1880s relates more closely with the opening of the Japanese Native Village in London, which represented a milestone with regard to the popularisation of Japanese themes for generic audiences. Inaugurated in January 1885, the Japanese Native Village featured the presence of Japanese artisans and entertainers recruited directly in Japan by the mastermind behind the event, Tannaker Buhicrosan. While various Japanese officials and Japanese residents in London were worried that it portrayed Japan stuck in a pre-modern age, Sir Hugh Cortazzi opines that the Japanese Native Village was “a major element in the popularity of things Japanese in London in the 1880s,” introducing “ordinary British people to a variety of aspects of Japanese popular culture in a more effective way than could have been gleaned from the books about Japan that were available in England at the time.”⁶⁶⁸ On the other hand, Amelia Scholtz denounces the fact that the exhibition mostly reinforced the commodified idea of Japanese culture in late Victorian Britain, pointing at the alienation inflicted by Tannaker on the Japanese workers.⁶⁶⁹ Despite this potential controversy, information about the Japanese Native Village in London appeared frequently in newspapers in the North East since its opening,⁶⁷⁰ so it is plausible that bazaar and fair organisers in the region might have recognized that arranging a Japan-themed event would attract a wider audience.

The Japanese Native Village in London, for example, was cited as the inspiration for the bazaar organised in Berwick Upon Tweed in August 1885, decorated by Carnegie & Co. of Newcastle.

⁶⁶⁷ Antoinette Burton, “Who Needs the Nation? Interrogating ‘British’ History,” *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: A Reader*, edited by Catherine Hall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 138-139.

⁶⁶⁸ Cortazzi, *Japan in Late Victorian London*, 73-74.

⁶⁶⁹ Scholtz, “‘Almond-Eyed Artisans’/‘Dishonouring the National Polity’,” 80.

⁶⁷⁰ Among the many: *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 6 December 1884; *Shields Daily News*, 23 January 1885, 4; *Newcastle Courant*, 19 June 1885, 4.

In a similar manner to London, native Japanese presided at the stalls in Berwick, a feature that led the organiser to describe the visit as a “tour of Japan for 1s [shilling]! No other summer trip necessary.”⁶⁷¹ As reported in one newspaper article on the event:

It will be observed that at several of the stalls “English is spoken here,” consequently visitors will have no difficulty in making what their wants known. Should any difficult occur, however, any of the committee, who will be recognisable by the wearing of a badge, will be happy to act as interpreters and assist in the sale of goods. Moreover, visitors should not be surprised that, owing to the advancement of the English usages in Japan during the reign of the present enlightened Mikado, many of the attendants at the stalls should speak excellent English.⁶⁷²

The newspaper article does not explain how the organisers were able to hire Japanese workers, however, it is possible to speculate that one of the intermediators might have been Tannaker Buhicrosan himself. Tannaker with his acrobatic troupe was in Berwick in July 1883 and it is plausible that he might have established some relationship with local patrons (Figure 41). As the Japanese Native Village in London suffered an unexpected interruption of a few months (from May to December 1885) due to a fire that burnt down the main hall, perhaps Tannaker sent part of the Japanese artisans under him to Berwick to keep them ‘occupied’ during the rebuilding.

QUEEN'S ROOMS, BERWICK.
MONDAY, TUESDAY, AND WEDNESDAY,
TANNAKER'S
JAPANESE.
SOMETHING NEW.
LITTLE ALL RIGHT, and
TOMMY THE WOLF.
WONDERFUL
PERFORMANCES.
GRAND
ENTERTAINMENT
AND
GIFT DISTRIBUTION.
The Proprietor having received a consignment of
100,000 Japanese Articles, the Manager will present
to each Person
A JAPANESE CURIOSITY.
Consisting of Tables, Cabinets, Papers, Umbrellas,
Fans, Fishing Rods, Trays, and other Novelties.
Doors open at 7.15. Commence at Eight.
Prices, 2s, 1s 6d, 1s, and 6d. Children Half-
price to 2s, 1s 6d, and 1s, 6d. See Bills.

Figure 41 - Tannaker's Japanese. *The Berwick Advertiser*, 13 July 1883, 1.

The Japanese Native Village in London served as a model for another public event organised in Newcastle in 1886. Named “Japanese Village Fair,” it was held at the Central Exchange Art

⁶⁷¹ *Alnwick Mercury*, 1 August 1885, 1.

⁶⁷² *The Berwick Advertiser*, 31 July 1885, 4.

Gallery and lasted for two weeks, beginning in the middle of January.⁶⁷³ Conte-Helm suggests that it may have been directly related to Tannaker's "Japanese Village" as the programme of the two events included "real Japanese artists at work."⁶⁷⁴ To corroborate this assumption, a newspaper article, covering the opening ceremony for the Japanese Village Fair clearly states that the Japanese "artificers" came directly from London by train.⁶⁷⁵

However, the Japanese Village in London should not be considered the only inspiration as various elements mentioned in the newspaper articles suggest that the Japanese Village Fair in Newcastle was also fundamentally linked to the local community. Firstly, the organiser, Ald. Barkas, was described as a local "scientific lecturer" by Benjamin Chapman Browne, the Mayor of Newcastle who presided at the opening and delivered the opening speech.⁶⁷⁶ Based on a 30-years knowledge of Barkas, Browne revealed that the organiser of the Japanese Village had been particularly active in delivering science lectures in the previous years, which were mainly addressed to members of the working class in the North East.⁶⁷⁷ Secondly, as the company who arranged the decorations, Carnegie and Co., was the same company responsible for the decorative scheme employed at the charity bazaar in Berwick, it is plausible that they reused part of that setting, creating a sort of common regional vocabulary, independent from London. In addition, the Japanese Village Fair was characterised by another important peculiarity. During the opening speech, Browne pointed to the new role that Japan was playing in the global stage and how it was deeply linked with the North East, echoing what Lord Armstrong said in 1885 at the launch of the Naniwa,⁶⁷⁸ but adding a further layer:

When [we] were boys there was no connection between the Japanese and the civilised countries of Europe, and one could get Japanese products only with great difficulty through the medium of China. Now [we] could see Japanese people in Newcastle, and the trade with Japan [is] a large and important part of our commerce. In the ornamentation of our houses and furniture, there [is] a large amount of the products of Japan. The people of that country [have] had a strong influence upon our ideas of what was beautiful.⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷³ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 18 January 1886, 8.

⁶⁷⁴ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 67.

⁶⁷⁵ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 18 January 1886, 8.

⁶⁷⁶ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 18 January 1886, 8.

⁶⁷⁷ Browne also added: "It was not only that he taught science, but he made it interesting." *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 18 January 1886, 8.

⁶⁷⁸ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 19 March 1885, 3.

⁶⁷⁹ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 18 January 1886, 8.

For the first time, Japan was acknowledged in a public speech for both its recent economic achievements and the excellence in its artistic tradition in relation to everyday experience in the North East. As testified by another commentator:

Mr Barkas had given the people of Newcastle the opportunity which they had never had before of appreciating and understanding what they had been wondering about some time back, when they saw so many Japanese in the streets of Newcastle.⁶⁸⁰

However, the Japanese Village Fair must be considered an exception among the Japan-themed events, as on no other occasion, did the opening speech delivered at charity bazaars or fairs acknowledge both the economic commerce with Japan including the aesthetic excellence of the decorative arts imported into the country, as the Mayor of Newcastle did.

The exceptionality of Barkas's Japanese Village Fair is further attested by the other Japan-themed events organised the following year, exclusively presenting an idealised image of Japanese culture. The "Grand Bazaar & Japanese Village Fair" in Gateshead,⁶⁸¹ for example, was promoted with an illustrated poster which evokes a fairy-tale imagery inspired by original Japanese sources (Figure 42).



Figure 42 - Grand Bazaar & Japanese Village Fair, Gateshead, 1887. C.GA11/12/1. Tyne and Wear Archives, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁶⁸¹ The Japan-themed event was a charity bazaar in aid of the local Prince Consort Read Primitive Methodist Chapel. *Newcastle Courant*, 25 November 1887, 5.

Various animals such as a frog, two crabs, a mantis, and giraffe stag beetle are altogether intent on writing the name of the charity bazaar over a piece of paper hold by an owl. The anthropomorphic gestures of some of the animals are emphasized by other details such as the *fundoshi* [Japanese traditional undergarment] worn by one of the crab; the *kiseru* [Japanese pipe] smoked by the frog; and the inkstick and inkstone employed by the mantis. On the ground it lays another piece of paper which reads *ōkado* [Cherry Blossom Hall] in Japanese ideographs. Anthropomorphic animal themes are well established in the Japanese visual culture,⁶⁸² and it seems likely that all of the animals and the ideograms were copied from one or more original Japanese sources, such as illustrated books, which had been common in Europe since the mid-nineteenth century.⁶⁸³ A few elements have been added by the designer/typographer, such as his acronym, which is perfectly integrated into the scene thanks to the decision to place it close to the small crab in the bottom-left corner in order to make it seem that the crustacean has just finished writing "R.S. & C°" (Figure 43).



Figure 43 - Grand Bazaar & Japanese Village Fair, Gateshead, 1887. Detail.

The same acronym appear in a poster of Tannaker's Japanese Native Village (1885), which, in a similar manner to the Gateshead's poster, presents a scene with animals engaging in anthropomorphic acts, in this case monkeys (Figure 44-Figure 45). Having commissioned their poster from the same designer/typographer chosen by Tannaker, it is then possible that the

⁶⁸² The earliest example is the set of four handscrolls entitled *Chōjū-jinbutsu-giga* [Animal-person Caricatures], painted in the mid-twelfth century and now held into the Kyoto National Museum and Tokyo National Museum. And they were still popular thanks to late nineteenth century Japanese artists such as Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831-1889). See, Timothy Clark, *Demon of Painting: The Art of Kawanabe Kyōsai* (London: British Museum Press, 1993); Rosina Buckland et al., *A Japanese Menagerie: Animal Pictures by Kawanabe Kyōsai* (London: British Museum Press, 2006).

⁶⁸³ Deborah Johnson, "Japanese prints in Europe before 1840," *The Burlington Magazine* 124, no. 951 (1982): 343.

organisers of the Japanese Village Fair in Gateshead aimed to project to the greatest extent the pre-modern atmosphere that also characterised the London Japanese Village. Moreover, the example of the charity event in Gateshead further demonstrates that the national network related to bazaars and fairs were not limited to companies of decorators but also included other professionals, such as poster designers and typographers.



Figure 44 - Japanese Native Village, 1885. In Sir Hugh Cortazzi, *Japan in Late Victorian London: The Japanese Native Village in Knightsbridge and 'The Mikado'*, 1885 (Norwich: Sainsbury Institute, 2009), 22.

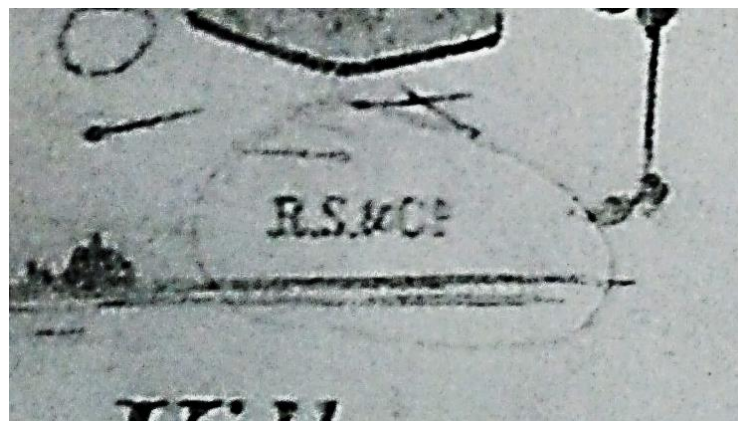


Figure 45 - Japanese Native Village, 1885. Detail.

In addition to the Japanese Village in London, charity bazaars in the North East fitted up to resemble a pre-modern Japanese setting also paid homage to another symbol of the Victorian Japan mania, namely the Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta *The Mikado*, which premiered in London on March 1885. The most direct references to the musical comedy were probably in the names of the aforementioned "Mikado Festival and Feast of Lanterns" organised in Darlington (1887) and in Middlesbrough (1889). In addition, it is possible to speculate that it was thanks to the popularity of *The Mikado*, which debuted in the North East in October 1885, that cross-dressing in Japanese attire for the stallholders became common in Japan-themed bazaars.⁶⁸⁴ To corroborate this assumption, it might be mentioned that although in 1882 Womersley listed that they could provide a full set of Japanese costumes among their services, newspaper articles on Japan-themed bazaars never reported stallholders in Japanese dress before 1885. The first mention occurred on the occasion of the Japanese Village in Berwick. As the local newspaper reports, "a feature of the fair, which [we] have omitted to notice, is the presence of a number of boys dressed in Japanese costumes with umbrellas, who serve vendors of articles."⁶⁸⁵ It appears that a couple of months before the arrival of *The Mikado* in North Eastern theatres, cross-dressing in Japanese attire was not a feature commonly highlighted, as the analysis of newspapers on these events suggests. In addition, having specified that the wearers were exclusively "boys," and not adults, it might be pointed that was perceived as a juvenile activity. Seeing that the Japanese costumes worn in theatrical performances became one of the features most appreciated and highlighted in critical reviews in North Eastern newspapers, it is unsurprising that *The Mikado* contributed significantly to the popularisation of wearing Japanese kimonos, which people at this time felt comfortable doing in safe and respectable environments like charity bazaars.

In charity bazaars in the North East, the practice of cross-dressing represented an important attraction of such events, further enhancing the Japan-themed decorations or other entertainments such as the musical performances. As local newspapers emphasised with regard

⁶⁸⁴ As suggested by Arisa Yamaguchi, "*The Mikado* made a breakthrough in Britain for kimonos to be experienced rather than being collected as objects." Arisa Yamaguchi, "Experiencing Japanese Kimono: Costumes of the Japanese-Themed Performances in the West End Theatres 1885-1905," *Studies in Victorian Culture* 18 (2020): 60.

⁶⁸⁵ *The Berwick Advertiser*, 7 August 1885, 2.

to the Mikado Festival in Darlington: “The lady attendants are attired in Japanese, and their costumes add greatly to an otherwise attractive scene.”⁶⁸⁶ Similarly, it was reported in 1888 with regard to two charity bazaars, one in Stanhope (a small market town in County Durham),⁶⁸⁷ and another in Loftus (a town on the border between the North East and North Yorkshire), that “the chief attraction being a Japanese bazaar, presided over by young ladies in Japanese costumes.”⁶⁸⁸ Christine Guth affirms that this phenomenon also naturalised Asian “Otherness” in the West,⁶⁸⁹ echoing David Bate, who has posited that “by incorporating the Orient into his or her self-image, the European also acknowledges that the East has entered into the West.”⁶⁹⁰ Elizabeth Kramer further suggests that the assimilation of Japanese traditional costumes into British fashion and visual culture “resonated not only with Victorian yearning to preserve ‘Old’ Japan, but also with the desire to recapture a time before Britain’s own industrialisation.”⁶⁹¹

It is noteworthy that the people dressed up were not exclusively women. As affirmed in an article that appeared in the *York Herald*, both ladies and gentlemen in cross-cultural attire “personate by their costumes some of the notabilities of Japan.”⁶⁹² In her analysis of missionary exhibitions with respect to China, Sarah Cheang affirms that both children and adults were given the opportunity to dress up as Asian in order to identify themselves with a “Chineseness of tragedy, oppression, idleness and exotic difference,”⁶⁹³ while reinforcing “Western material superiority [and] instilling in them the missionary instinct.”⁶⁹⁴ More generally, as Yuko Matsukawa denounces, the practice of cross-dressing as Japanese also “substitute[d] white bodies for Japanese ones” as “any woman with the right accessories [...] could become ‘Japanese’.”⁶⁹⁵ The disappearance of Asian bodies allowed for what Josephine Lee terms *decorative orientalism*: “the fantasy of a particularly close and intimate relationship with Asian

⁶⁸⁶ *Northern Echo*, 20 October 1887, 8.

⁶⁸⁷ *Newcastle Courant*, 6 April 1888, 5.

⁶⁸⁸ *York Herald*, 22 September 1888, 6.

⁶⁸⁹ Christine Guth, “Charles Longfellow and Okakura Kakuzo: Cultural Cross-Dressing in the Colonial Context,” *positions* 8, no. 3 (2000): 607.

⁶⁹⁰ David Bate, “The Occidental Tourist: Photography and the Colonizing Vision,” *Afterimage* 20, no. 1 (1992): 12.

⁶⁹¹ Elizabeth Kramer, “‘Not so Japan-Easy’: The British Reception of Japanese Dress in the Late Nineteenth Century,” *Textile History* 44, no. 1 (2013): 20.

⁶⁹² *York Herald*, 22 October 1887, 3.

⁶⁹³ Sarah Cheang, “The Ownership and Collection of Chinese Material Culture by Women in Britain, c.1890-c.1935,” PhD Thesis (University of Sussex, 2003), 58-59.

⁶⁹⁴ Cheang, Sarah. “‘Our Missionary Wembley’,” 183.

⁶⁹⁵ Yuko Matsukawa, “Cross-dressing as Whitewashing: The Kimono Wednesdays Protests and the Erasure of Asian/American Bodies,” *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 20, no. 4 (2019): 591.

objects that were easily acquired and just as easily disposed of.”⁶⁹⁶ In other words, cross-dressing in Japanese attire might also have turned Western people into “powerful agents in the production of Orientalism,” as suggested by Yoshihara Mari.⁶⁹⁷

Simultaneously, the experience of the people who wore Japanese costumes also functioned as a potential transcultural dialogue motivated by an aesthetic appreciation. Since the time of early contacts, British people developed favourable impressions of Japanese traditional dress, which epitomised the main characteristics of the Japanese style: beauty, decorativeness, and simplicity. By wearing Japanese traditional costumes, stallholders attempted to embrace part of the artistic connotation attributed to Japanese aesthetics, marking their own personal taste to the wider community. As discussed by Emma Ferry concerning the Loan Exhibition of Women’s Industries, held in Bristol in 1885, the ladies involved in the organisation were not only supporting other working-class women displaying their works, they were also shaping an environment in which to promote their philanthropic values, and their active role as middle-class women.⁶⁹⁸ Ferry defines this phenomenon as “double display,” which might be extended to the stallholders who presided at the Japan-themed bazaars in the North East. Not only did they display their works, but they were also enhancing their public persona by embracing part of the refinement associated to Japan. Following the ideas suggested by Guth and Kramer, it might be affirmed that this cross-cultural phenomenon epitomised not only the dominant role played by Britain toward Japan, but also the necessity for Victorians to incorporate Japanese elements to corroborate their artistic aspirations. Accordingly, the body of each stallholder functioned not only as a substitution for a Japanese one, as suggested by Matsukawa, but also as a medium through which the transcultural dialogue might take place.

In addition to the phenomenon of the “double display,” the transcultural connotation encoded in the cross-dressing was even more evident taking into consideration the type of kimono worn by stallholders in the North East. In a group photo documenting a charity bazaar organised in

⁶⁹⁶ Josephine Lee, “American Decorative Orientalism from the 19th into the 20th Century,” *Orientalism at the Turn into the Twentieth Century: Cultural Representations and Glocal Studies*, edited by Kenji Kitayama, Makoto Kinoshita and Yuko Matsukawa (Tokyo: Seijo University Center for Glocal Studies, 2015), 18.

⁶⁹⁷ Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) 10.

⁶⁹⁸ Emma Ferry, “‘A Novelty among Exhibitions’: The Loan Exhibition of Women’s Industries, Bristol 1885,” *Women and the Making of Built Space in England, 1870-1950*, edited by Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) 54.

North Shields in the early 1900s (Figure 46), for example, the costumes worn by the ladies and children look more similar to dressing gowns than indigenous Japanese kimono.



Figure 46 - *Group in Japanese Dress for a Chapel Sale of Work*. North Shields, 1900c. Photograph. NEG43107. Beamish Museum, County Durham.



Figure 47 - *Chic Kimonos & Wraps*, *Harrods catalogue* (1909). 1356. Beamish Museum, County Durham.

Still made in Japan, these alternative models were modified to meet the desires of the foreign market, and were widely available and very fashionable in Britain at the time,⁶⁹⁹ as testified in the Harrods's catalogue published in 1909 (Figure 47). As discussed by Elizabeth Kramer, since the last quarter of the nineteenth century British dress reformers mainly viewed the kimono as a loose-fitting garment, which not only proves a critical position against the Victorian fashion for women – characterised by constricting corsets and stays –,⁷⁰⁰ but it also demonstrates a lack of familiarity by the late Victorians with how the Japanese “garment was worn in actuality.”⁷⁰¹ This reinterpretation persisted throughout the decades, reinforced by the representation of Japanese dress in theatrical operettas such as *The Mikado* (1885), in which kimonos were worn as loosely (Figure 48). A photograph of British ladies wearing kimonos in a Japan-themed bazaar organised in 1924 suggested that style of wearing kimono outside of Japan did not change much from the middle of 1880s (Figure 49).



Figure 48 – Miss Jessie Bond as “Petti Sing” in *The Mikado*, 1887. Photograph. *Photographs Registered at the Stationer's Company*, 228, COPY 1/379. The National Archives, Kew, London.

⁶⁹⁹ Akiko Savas, “Dilute to Taste – Kimonos for the British Market at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century,” *International Journal of Fashion* 4, no. 2 (2017): 157-81; Arisa Yamaguchi, “Kimonos for Foreigners: Orientalism in Kimonos Made for the Western Market, 1900-1920,” *The Journal of Dress History* 1, no. 2 (2017): 100-111.

⁷⁰⁰ Christine Bayles Kortsch, *Dress Culture in Late Victorian Women's Fiction: Literacy, Textiles, and Activism* (London: Routledge, 2009) 55-57. See also Leigh Summers, *Bound to Please: A History of the Victorian Corset* (Oxford: Berg, 2001).

⁷⁰¹ Kramer, “‘Not so Japan-Easy’,” 14.



Figure 49 – Japanese Bazaar at Elswick Road Wesleyan Church, 1925. Photograph. DF.GRA/1/2. Tyne and Wear Archives, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

As unearthed by Akiko Savas, Japanese designers were aware of this popularity, and from the 1890s they took advantage of the British enthusiasm, exporting alternative versions of kimonos in Britain to address this demand.⁷⁰² Therefore, rather than an example of British appropriation of Japanese cultural tradition, the reciprocity and mutual influence encoded in this cultural exchange should be understood as a transcultural phenomenon of which the Japanese voice was not completely silenced, despite the unbalanced power relation between Britain and Japan. Taking this into consideration, while kimono wearing in charity bazaars certainly added to conjuring up scenes of “Old” Japan satisfying the exotic fascination of stallholders and visitors, it also contributed to popularising throughout the North East the transcultural connotation encapsulated in the practice of cross-dressing in Japanese attire.

1895-1913

The period between 1895 and 1913 was characterised by a relevant decline of Japan-themed charity bazaars and fairs in the North East of England, as well as a fall of Japanese objects present in generic bazaars. With regard to the latter, the decrease was particularly dramatic

⁷⁰² Akiko Savas, “Dilute to Taste – Kimonos for the British Market at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century,” *International Journal of Fashion* 4, no. 2 (2017): 157-81.

according to newspaper sources, from 17 to 5; while bazaars and fairs were “only” cut by half (Graph 7). As Japanese objects were no longer seen as the latest novelty, by the 1890s they had lost some of their attraction among the crowds. As already discussed, the decade in which the interest in “everything Japanese” became part of the Victorian popular culture was the 1880s, so it is no surprise that from the second half of the 1890s the attractiveness of Japanese imported articles was reduced.

Concerning the decrease of Japan-themed bazaars and fairs, from the 1890s the enthusiasm and the popularity of these public events was probably impacted by the new role that Japan had started to play on the world stage. As previously discussed, the victorious war campaign against China in 1895 clearly manifested the imperialistic ambition of Japan, which Great Britain started to see as a potential ally. Accordingly, in 1902 the Anglo-Japanese alliance was signed between the British Empire and Japan, mainly for contrasting Russia’s hegemonic attempts in Asia. The defeat of the Russian army and navy by the Japanese in 1905 proved decisive in forcing the Western public to rethink their attitudes toward Japan. Probably worried of being associated with such aggressive character manifested by Japan, some bazaar organisers opted to a different decorative scheme, while others simply ignored or recontextualised this new and controversial side of Japan, which explains the decrease of Japan-themed charity events in the North East.

Ignoring the conflict against China and sheltering in the idealised and stereotyped representation of Japan was the main strategy undertaken in the North East during the second half of the 1890s. In contrast to the other public events discussed in the previous chapter, the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894 did not immediately cause a change in the way Japan-themed bazaars and fairs were organised, promoted or decorated. Following the end of the conflict, two Japanese-themed charity bazaars were organised in Newcastle (1895) and South Shields (1896), in which any reference to the Sino-Japanese War was omitted. In the former, the focus was centred on entertainments such as “Japanese concerts and Japanese dances and music,”⁷⁰³ and on offering “virtual travel,” as the name “Japan in Newcastle” suggests. While the “Japanese Bazaar” in South Shields still drew on the popularity of Gilbert and Sullivan’s *The Mikado*, naming “Yum Yum Band” one of the various musical attractions

⁷⁰³ *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 9 December 1895, 4

offered at the event.⁷⁰⁴ This reassuring stereotype was undoubtedly more in line with the tone of an event such as a charity bazaar, and organisers persisted in depicting Japan as a distant and exotic place worthy of a temporary and imaginary visit.

The same idealised image of Japan was employed even in the following decade, albeit with some slight changes. In 1902, the “Anglo-Japanese Festival and Fancy Bazaar” was organised in Whitley Bay and it is interesting that the name included a reference to the military alliance which was signed that year between Japan and Britain. The limited amount of details provided in the official pamphlet produced to advertise the event does not allow the assessment of the extent to which the decorations were to some extent “Anglo-Japanese,” however, the publication provides some insights to disprove this speculation.

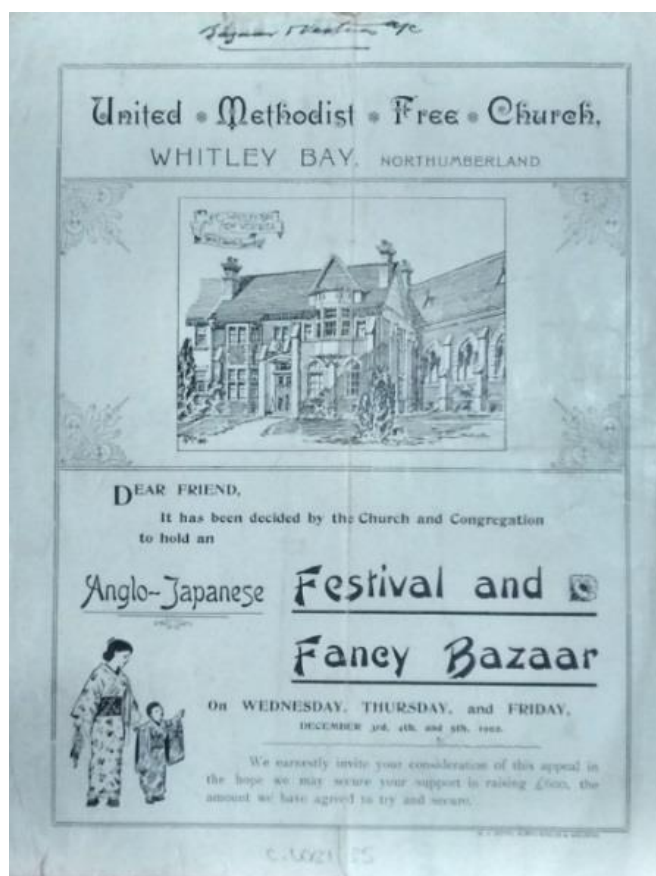


Figure 50 - *Anglo-Japanese Festival and Fancy Bazaar*. 1902, C.WB1/37/2. Tyne and Wear Archives, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

The designer chose to incorporate only a small reference to Japan: in the front page (Figure 50), for example, a Japanese mother with a child, both in kimono, are represented (Figure 51); while

⁷⁰⁴ *Shields Daily News*, 5 November 1896, 2 Yum Yum is the name of one of the “three little maids” in the musical operetta wrote by William S. Gilbert.

a beautiful woman playing the *shamisen* is depicted in one the internal pages (Figure 52). By selecting such traditional themes, it appears clear that there was no intention to address the new relationship between Britain and Japan. In a similar manner to the popularity of the geisha theme in Edwardian theatrical productions, the obstinate representation of Japanese women might even be associated with the intention of reaffirming the feminine connotation of Japan whose recent military successes partially overshadowed. Therefore, the presence of “Anglo-Japanese” in the name of the bazaar should be seen more as an attempt to take advantage of a very recent political event, rather an explicit effort to reassess the stereotyped image of Japan.



Figure 51 - *Anglo-Japanese Festival and Fancy Bazaar*, 1902. Detail.



Figure 52 - *Anglo-Japanese Festival and Fancy Bazaar*, 1902. Detail.

The image of Japan as a dream-like country remained prominent also thanks to the work of decorators who did not change their decorative assets after the Sino-Japanese War. According to the newspaper reports, bazaars in the North East were arranged with very few differences in comparison to the 1880s. For example, Newcastle-based Carnegie & Co., had been responsible for the decorative schemes of at least five Japan-themed bazaars from 1885 to 1904 in the region. Described in the newspaper article as “arranged and prepared [...] to represent a village in Japan,”⁷⁰⁵ the charity bazaar on which Carnegie worked in 1904 employed the same Japanese pre-modern village theme as in the charity bazaar organised in Berwick in 1885, which was directly inspired by Tannaker’s Japanese Native Village. In other words, notwithstanding the fact that Japan arose as a British military ally, decorators such as Carnegie persisted in following the same models established two decades before.

⁷⁰⁵ *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, 26 October 1904, 6.

This response was also common in other parts of Britain, as exemplified by the Japan-British Exhibition organised in London in 1910. Despite the name, the British government did not take part in the organisation, leaving everything in the hands of Japanese officials and a British entrepreneur, Imre Kiralfy.⁷⁰⁶ As discussed by Stefan Tanaka, Japanese leaders aimed to showcase that Japan was not “the country with no past” represented in British popular culture,⁷⁰⁷ but rather a modern nation whose recent successes were built on a 2500-year-old civilisation. Mimicking the Western colonial propaganda, the Japanese organiser attempted to reinforce the idea of Japan as “the Britain of the East.” For example, in the “Palace of the Orient” – where the Japanese government had more control over its image –, Japan was depicted as a colonising power by emphasising its civilising missions in Manchuria, Taiwan, and Korea.⁷⁰⁸ Conversely, Kiralfy reckoned that to attract large crowds, it was also necessary to arrange spectacles in line with the British expectation and exotic fantasies, such as human exhibitions and “traditional” Japanese Villages. The Japanese officials were reluctant to accept all these requests, so Kiralfy bypassed the Japanese government entirely by sending his own recruiters to Japan.⁷⁰⁹ The exhibition was a great success in the eye of the British people,⁷¹⁰ but it was criticised by the Japanese press which emphasised that the juxtaposition of traditional Japanese Village with Taiwanese and Ainu counterparts represented a national humiliation.⁷¹¹ Despite the great effort of the Japanese officials to make Japan appear as a modern empire, British professionals such as Kiralfy persisted in representing the Asian country following the orientalist stereotypes. In this regard, it is no surprise that the same occurred also a region such as the North East, as exemplified by Carnegie.

⁷⁰⁶ Ayako Hotta-Lister, *The Japan-British Exhibition of 1910: Gateway to the Island Empire of the East* (Richmond: Japan Library, 1999), 52.

⁷⁰⁷ “According to that Western historiographical framework, the Japanese past and present were synonymous. To merely plug Japan into the developmental model of Enlightenment would thus have meant the virtual denial of Japan’s past and acceptance of a perpetual state of inferiority [...]. The efforts of Japanese intellectuals beginning in the 1890s either to rework Japan’s past so that it did have history, in a developmental sense, or to redefine the universal, making it less heavily biased toward Europe, was an attempt to resolve this dilemma” Stefan Tanaka, *Japan’s Orient: Rendering Pasts into History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 267.

⁷⁰⁸ John Hennessey, “Moving up in the World: Japan’s Manipulation of Colonial Imagery at the 1910 Japan–British Exhibition,” *Museum History Journal* 11, no. 1 (2018): 28.

⁷⁰⁹ Angus Lockyer, “Japan at the Exhibition: 1867-1970,” PhD Thesis (Stanford University, 2000), 153-156.

⁷¹⁰ William Coaldrake, introduction to *The British Press and the Japan-British Exhibition of 1910*, edited by Hirokichi Mutsu (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 2001), x-xii; Hirokichi Mutsu, ed., *The British Press and the Japan-British Exhibition of 1910*, Facsimile Edition of the Original dated 1910 (Melbourne: University of Melbourne, 2001).

⁷¹¹ Hotta-Lister, *The Japan-British Exhibition of 1910*, 131-148; Lockyer, “Japan at the Exhibition,” 153-156.

Conclusion

Drawing upon newspaper articles and archival documents dated between 1850 and 1913, it was possible to identify at least 63 charity bazaars and fairs in which a wide array of visitors was able to admire and purchase Japanese manufactured articles. To explain this popularity, this chapter has proposed that Japan was such a widespread subject in the North East that fundraising and event organisers considered it an effective tool to attract visitors, as well as an appropriate setting to promote local endeavours such as charity campaigns.

Organised in both urban and rural areas in the region, charity bazaars or fairs represented for many people in the North East the first chance to have contact with Japanese visual and material culture in safe and familiar environments such as town halls. Initially, Japanese objects were considered an exotic curiosity worthy of putting on display, and their presence represented an attraction for visitors as well as a sign of distinction for the collector who donated it or lent it, demonstrating that this phenomenon was not a prerogative of the loan exhibitions discussed in the previous chapter, but it was valid also in the philanthropic context.

From the early 1880s, their increased availability in regional shops made Japanese goods less appealing as exotic curiosities *per se*, but, as the British fascination with Japan was reaching its peak, charity bazaars and fairs increased in number and began to be fitted up as pre-modern Japanese villages, a decorative scheme that this chapter has traced back to the Japanese Court at the Vienna International Exposition (1873). In addition to addressing the British fascination with Japan and its decorative objects, the appeal of these Japanese Villages in the North East lay in its function as a vehicle for virtual travel to an idealised, pre-industrial society.

The predominance of this decorative scheme, which was arranged in line with the stereotype of “Old” Japan, persisted even after the Japanese Empire’s position on the world stage changed due its victorious campaign against China in 1895. While some bazaar organisers attempted to avoid being associated with this new image of Japan by choosing another setting entirely for their display, others decided to ignore the major change in Japan’s identity, and persisted in thinking “Old” Japan an appropriate decorative scheme for charity bazaars. As already discussed in the previous chapter with regard to entertaining events such as acrobatic shows and theatrical plays, the latter decision should also be read as an implicit attempt to counterbalance the threatening role of Japan as a new economic and military power, reassuring the people in the North East that the country was still in a subaltern position to Britain.

While prominent, the racial discourse was not the only narrative that characterised Japan-themed bazaars and fairs in the North East. On the contrary, this chapter has identified transcultural phenomena which deconstructed the simplistic representation of Japan as an exclusively passive entity within the unbalanced power relation with Britain. To be considered appealing and successful in promoting charity events, amassing Japanese objects as exotic curiosities quickly became less and less effective. Instead, it was the genuine effort to arrange what in the eyes of Victorian people appeared as an “authentic” representation of Japan that was praised by the local press, demonstrating a certain degree of deference in regard to a culture such as the Japanese, which, according to the Victorian design reformers, did not suffer an artistic decline due to the industrialisation, like the British did.⁷¹² Professional decorators played a prominent role in presenting this unified and idealised image of Japan by arranging a pre-modern Japanese Village. As this decorative scheme originated from the Japanese garden arranged in the Vienna International Exposition, it was originally designed by the Meiji government to offer a glimpse of something quintessentially Japanese to an international audience. Through the mediation of Christopher Dresser, British companies of decorators developed this setting into a codified representation of pre-modern Japan, which was rearranged with as few modifications as possible in urban and rural venues around Britain and also the North East. In the other words, the simplistic dichotomy between “New” and “Old Japan” – commonly associated with the Saidian dualism between “Self/West” and “Other/East” – appears inadequate to describe the complexity of a phenomenon such as the representation of Japan in fairs and charity bazaars. Taking this into consideration, the imperialist longing for Japanese “authenticity” which journalists sought in charity bazaars has also been considered in this chapter as the result of a transcultural dialogue built upon the Meiji government’s conscious attempt to celebrate Japanese customs and arts in the West.

Similarly, wearing Japanese costumes in charity bazaars has also been discussed through the lens of the transcultural approach which has revealed that such a practice incorporated an ambivalent nature. While donning kimonos by British individuals in local events inevitably erased the Japanese body from the popular representation of Japan, it simultaneously contributed to naturalising the Asian “Otherness” in Britain, allowing stallholders in the North East to promote their public persona in line with the late Victorian, cosmopolitan taste and

⁷¹² Yuko Kikuchi and Toshio Watanabe, “British Discovery of Japanese Art,” in *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000, Vol. 5* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 153.

fashionability. This ambiguity has been further demonstrated considering that the type of Japanese costumes worn in the North East were mostly alternative models of kimonos designed in Japan with the Western market in mind, suggesting that the Japanese were an active part of this transcultural dialogue. In short, rather than just erasing the physicality of the Japanese, the practice of cross-dressing in charity bazaars and fairs transformed the British body into a contact zone in which the unbalanced power relation between Britain and Japan was temporarily questioned for the sake of a philanthropic cause.

Ultimately, the transcultural approach employed in this thesis has allowed us to take into consideration the coexistence of the imperialistic and cosmopolitan narratives that ultimately shaped the social recognition of Japan as well as the commodification of Japanese culture in a provincial region such as the North East. Both fundraising and entertaining practices played crucial roles as mediators between local communities and transnational trends such as Japan mania. At the same time, however, they remained resistant to change in how to represent the rapidly modernising and militarising Japan, its political relationship with Britain, and its trading connection with the North East.

Chapter IV: Retailers

Introduction

The Victorian practice of amassing eclectic collections of articles from across the world is perfectly portrayed by the architectural historian Mark Girouard:

Most Victorians were incurable nest-makers; but their equivalents of twigs, straw, and leaves were Japanese fans, vases, photographs, bronze statues, and clocks, which they wove together into a richly indistinguishable fuzz.⁷¹³

According to him, the nesting instinct suggests that Victorians were deeply affected by both the “desire of security” and “escaping,” in contrast to the common idea of the Victorian period as a “smug and self-confident age.”⁷¹⁴ This interpretation is particularly effective for describing how the interest in everything Japanese was manifested in Victorian Britain, especially with regard to the late-nineteenth-century consumer culture, as this chapter aims to theorise.

Traditionally, the British fascination with Japan and the popular enthusiasm stirred by Japanese decorative objects have been divided into three periods. Elizabeth Aslin proposes that in the 1860s Japanese articles were mainly appreciated as artistic objects by small, elite circles of artists, collectors, and art critics; in the 1870s, Japanese art was embraced by members of the Aesthetic Movement and appreciated among a larger, but still select audience; and only in the 1880s did the Japan mania fully take hold of the larger culture.⁷¹⁵ As noted, however, this strict periodisation does not consider the complex array of motivations related to the acquisition and display of Japanese decorative objects.⁷¹⁶ Furthermore, while the previous chapters have confirmed that Aslin is right to identify the 1880s as the decade during which the interest in all things Japanese reached its peak, the actual beginnings of this phenomenon should be taken into consideration. For example, William Bellars, author of *The Fine Arts and their Uses* (1876), denounced already in 1877 the indiscriminate consumption of Japanese decorative objects among middle-class consumers:

A very curious mania is that for Japanese decoration. There can be no doubt that the Japanese are great masters of the art of colour. It is equally clear that they have not yet mastered the art of drawing. But instead of being content to take hints from them on those points in which they excel, the present mania induces would-be artistic people to import Japanese productions into their houses by wholesale, and to decorate their rooms with appalling representations of ladies with their hair on

⁷¹³ Mark Girouard, introduction to Susan Lasdun, *Victorians at Home* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1981), 20.

⁷¹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷¹⁵ Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement: Prelude to Art Nouveau* (London: Elek, 1969), 79.

⁷¹⁶ See, Elizabeth Kramer, “From Specimen to Scrap: Japanese kimono and textiles in the British Victorian Interior, 1875-1900,” *Material Cultures in Britain, 1740-1920*, edited by John Potvin and Alla Myzelev (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 129-130.

skewers, and with abnormally elongated faces and almond-shaped eyes, painted in resplendent hues upon the background of an impossible landscape, all being accepted without question because they are Japanese.⁷¹⁷

Beyond Bellars's personal criticism, it is worth pointing out that already in the late 1870s the enthusiasm for Japanese artistic objects was perceived as a sort of "mania" and, as this thesis proposes, this assertion should also be extended to a region such as the North East of England.

While analysing the practice of promoting the consumption of Japanese artefacts in Britain, various scholars identify the London International Exposition (1862) as the turning point.⁷¹⁸ However, very few of them account for the critical role played by cultural mobilisers such as British retailers in spreading interest in Japan throughout the country during the following decades.⁷¹⁹ The only English retailer studied in detail is Arthur Lasenby Liberty (1843-1917), who in 1875 established his first shop, Liberty & Co., in London. As Alison Adburgham has shown, Japanese textiles and other decorative objects represented one of the main reasons for Liberty's commercial success, especially in the early years of his business.⁷²⁰ The other shops in London then supplying similar wares have not been analysed with the same exactness, being instead mentioned principally to contextualise the business careers of key figures such as Christopher Dresser (1834-1904), the well-known designer and main promoter of Japanese cultural products in the UK.⁷²¹ Lastly, there are no studies paying heed to shops outside London that sold Japanese decorative objects in the late Victorian period. This gap in knowledge led scholars to imagine that the popular consumption of Japanese visual and material culture was mostly a metropolitan phenomenon, but this study aims to debunk this assumption.

As Benjamin Chapman Browne's speech at the opening of the Japanese Village Fair in 1885 has revealed, at that time Japanese decorative art was widely popular in towns such as Newcastle. However, it does not tell us when this phenomenon started and how diffused it was throughout the region.⁷²² To dispel these doubts, this chapter firstly identifies those department

⁷¹⁷ William Bellars, "Manias," *Tinsley's Magazine* 20 (1877): 476.

⁷¹⁸ John MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 124-129; Olive Checkland, *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan, 1868-1912* (London: Macmillan, 1989), 187-195.

⁷¹⁹ Among the exceptions: Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich, "Selected Galleries, Dealers and Exhibition Spaces in London, 1850-1939," *The Rise of the Modern Art Market in London, 1850-1939*, edited by Pamela Fletcher and Anne Helmreich (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 306-307; Keiko Itoh, *The Japanese Community in Pre-war Britain: From Integration to Disintegration* (London: Curzon, 2001) 75-78.

⁷²⁰ Alison Adburgham, *Liberty's. A Biography of a Shop* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975).

⁷²¹ Widar Halén, *Christopher Dresser: A Pioneer of Modern Design* (London: Phaidon Press, 1993), 39-46.

⁷²² *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 18 January 1886, 8.

stores and shops in the North East from which Victorian “nest-makers” might have purchased Japanese articles, then analyses the ways they were advertised. In the next chapter, the consumer perspective of this relationship is discussed, starting from the motivations behind purchasing, collecting and displaying Japanese articles in Victorian middle-class homes. This separation should not suggest that the two spheres were unconnected, on the contrary, they frequently influenced each other, as later discussed in the example of the Japanese Shop in Darlington. However, analysing the retailing distribution by itself allows a detailed investigation of how the Japan mania was promoted in the North East through advertisements and how Japanese imagery and culture was commodified in the region over time, from the late 1850s to 1913.

In other words, rather than focusing on the practice of collecting, which is discussed in the next chapter, this section of the thesis aims to further clarify to what extent people in the North East were exposed to the Japan mania and which transcultural flow associated with Japan was predominant in retailing practices. Accordingly, in addition to providing a close approximation of the number of retailers in the region which sold objects manufactured in Japan, the main research question addressed in this chapter is the following: *how was Japan and its material culture advertised what were the narratives which were followed?*

To answer this question and offer a substantial picture of this phenomenon, newspapers has been chosen to be the prominent resource. Using advertisements appeared in regional papers as a key primary source has its advantages because, as Thomas Richards states, after London’s Great Exhibition of 1851, the advertisement industry acted “with the aim of keying into the central ideologies of bourgeois life,”⁷²³ for which “the best way to sell people commodities was to sell them the ideology of England, from the national identity embodied in the monarchy to the imperial expansion taking place in Africa.”⁷²⁴ Hence, analysing how Japanese decorative objects were advertised within provincial newspapers might reveal how Japanese culture was represented and commodified regionally. In contrast, relying heavily on advertisements has certain practical limitations. As most of the retailers in the North East employed almost exclusively generic terms in their adverts, this research was not able to assess the quality of the Japanese articles. Moreover, as it cannot be excluded that some retailers might have sold

⁷²³ Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851–1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 10.

⁷²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

Japanese decorative objects without advertising them in local newspapers, so the number of shops identified cannot be considered definitive but only indicative of a tendency. Taking into consideration this limitation, this chapter draws its conclusions focusing exclusively on the narrative of the advertising discourse developed by retailers in the North East.

Regarding the terminology, the use of the word ‘commodity’ in this chapter is directly related to the work of Arjun Appadurai, who affirms “commodities can provisionally be defined as objects of economic value” where for economic value is not intended “the inherent property of objects, but is a judgment made about them by subjects.”⁷²⁵ This social interpretation is further developed considering that “consumption” implies both sending and receiving social messages.⁷²⁶ This understanding of commodities is crucial to untie the complexity of the two-way relationship between shops selling Japanese imported articles and their consumers,⁷²⁷ but it also resonates with the wider transcultural interaction between the North East and Japan.

In order to provide a theoretical framework, this chapter firstly offers an overview of Victorian consumer culture and the commodification of the “Orient” through Guy Debord’s concept of the “society of the spectacle,” in which “as advertisement or direct entertainment consumption, the spectacle is the present model of socially dominant life.”⁷²⁸ This notion is employed in line with Thomas Richards’s analysis of Victorian advertising,⁷²⁹ as well as Krista Lysack’s discussion of what she has defined as the “imperial marketplace.”⁷³⁰ Building upon these concepts, the second part of this chapter investigates the 112 shops known to have sold Japanese decorative objects in the North East of England between 1861 and 1913, in both urban and rural centres. Two shops, in particular, the Mikado Bazaar in Sunderland and the Japanese Shop in Darlington are discussed in detail.

⁷²⁵ Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” *The Social Life of Things*, edited by Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3; see also, Arjun Appadurai, “Definitions: Commodity and Commodification,” *Rethinking Commodification: Cases and Readings in Law and Culture*, edited by Martha Ertman and Joan Williams (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 35.

⁷²⁶ Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” 31.

⁷²⁷ According to Appadurai: “Demand thus conceals two different relationships between consumption and production: 1. On the one hand, demand is determined by social and economic forces; 2. on the other, it can manipulate, within limits, these social and economic forces. The important point is that from a historical point of view, these two aspects of demand can affect each other.” *Ibid.*, 31.

⁷²⁸ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1977), thesis 6.

⁷²⁹ Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*.

⁷³⁰ Krista Lysack, *Come Buy, Come Buy: Shopping and the Culture of Consumption in Victorian Women’s Writing* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2008).

Overall, this chapter not only demonstrates that in the North East it was possible to buy Japanese imported articles from the early 1860s, but it also identifies the main narratives through which such decorative objects were advertised, shedding light on the different ways in which the commodification of Japan played a role in the late Victorian consumer culture. Local retailers sold Japanese articles in towns and villages, meaning almost everyone in the region had the chance to come into contact with Japanese objects. Moreover, the roles played by local retailers were crucial in allowing people in the North East to engage in the transcultural phenomenon of the Japan mania. As did their fellows in other parts of the country, retailers in the North East contributed to the consolidation of the commodified image of pre-modern Japan in their advertisements. For example, as will be shown, Alexander Corder pursued this objective more than anyone with regard to his shop, Mikado Bazaar. He tried to sell as many Japanese decorative objects as possible by arranging a fictional environment in which the idea of pre-modern Japan represented a reassuring setting, where the people of Sunderland might shelter from the everyday anxieties listed by Girouard at the outset of this chapter.

Victorian Consumer Culture and the Commodification of the “Oriental” Spectacle

As discussed by Thomas Richards, Victorian consumer culture experienced a significant change in the mid-nineteenth century, developing into a “commodity culture.” Following Debord’s assertion that commodity culture is “both the result and the project of the existing mode of production,”⁷³¹ Richards traces back the origin of this widespread cultural phenomenon to the Victorian period and specifically to London’s Great Exhibition of 1851. According to him, “the spectacle of the Exhibition elevated the commodity above the mundane act of exchange and created a coherent representational universe for commodities.”⁷³² Regarding commercial strategy, Richards explains, “the best way to sell people commodities was to sell them the ideology of England, from the national identity embodied in the monarchy to the imperial expansion taking place in Africa [...]”⁷³³ Consequently, the central role in this process was played by the advertising industry that from the 1850s became an important tool to unify middle-class ideologies and consuming behaviours.⁷³⁴ Richard’s concept of a

⁷³¹ Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1977), thesis 6.

⁷³² Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*, 4.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷³⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

“coherent representational universe for commodities” can be extended also to East Asian products, which represented an exotic “Other” in the everyday life of many Victorians.

With regard to the presence and promotion of imported luxury goods in British shops, Krista Lysack identifies the “imperial exhibitionary complex” as a phenomenon which transformed shop interiors into an “imperial marketplace.”⁷³⁵ Following Timothy Mitchell, who stated:

The nineteenth-century image of the Orient was constructed not just in Oriental studies, romantic novels, and colonial administrations, but in all the new procedures with which Europeans began to organize the representation of the world, from museums and world exhibitions to architecture, schooling, tourism, the fashion industry, and the commodification of everyday life,⁷³⁶

Lysack re-contextualises Bennett’s concept of the “exhibitionary complex”⁷³⁷ in order to explain that in shops dealing with East-Asian objects “shoppers became tourists to their own desires within an empire at home that marketed a complete consumerist vision of an exoticized East.”⁷³⁸ The resulting environment is defined by Lysack as an “imperial marketplace,” whose commercial strategy was to attract new potential customers, promising them an exotic spectacle and after that, instilling the desire to purchase imported luxury goods. As Lysack suggests, in those instances the desire was “made through the act of looking.”⁷³⁹

An example that clarifies the concept of “imperial marketplace” is Liberty’s Department Store in London. Founded in 1875 by Arthur Lasenby Liberty (1843-1917), the business rapidly became renowned for dealing with the textiles, ornaments, and other artistic objects from East-Asian countries. As Alison Abdurgham has shown, Japanese textiles and other decorative objects represented one of the main reasons for Liberty’s commercial success, especially in the early years of his business.⁷⁴⁰ Sonia Ashmore has posited that rather than suggesting a new consumption pattern, Liberty’s successfully promoted a new lifestyle that naturalised the consumption of exotica both in the style of dressing and in furnishing the home.⁷⁴¹ In Liberty’s promotional strategy, the promise of an exotic spectacle concerning Japan was evident. In an advertisement from around 1880 (Figure 53), the main illustration is directly inspired by

⁷³⁵ Lysack, *Come Buy, Come Buy*, 18-19.

⁷³⁶ Timothy Mitchell, “Orientalism and Exhibitionary Order,” *Colonialism and Culture*, edited by Nicholas Dirks (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992), 289.

⁷³⁷ Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum* (London: Routledge, 1995), 60-61.

⁷³⁸ Lysack, *Come Buy, Come Buy*, 25.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*, 35.

⁷⁴⁰ Alison Abdurgham, *Liberty’s. A Biography of a Shop* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975).

⁷⁴¹ Sonia Ashmore, “Liberty and Lifestyle: Shopping for Art and Luxury in Nineteenth-Century London,” *Buying for the Home: Shopping for the Domestic from the Seventeenth Century to the Present*, edited by David Hussey and Margaret Ponsonby (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), 73-90.

Japanese imagery, and only related to the actual articles on sale.⁷⁴² The composition is characterised by a daydream tone in which a beautiful Japanese woman resembling a female figure painted by a *ukiyo-e* master is surrounded by flying birds. This provided a “coherent representational universe” for some of the most popular Japanese imported articles which were likely found in the shop, such as fans and kimono. Rather than the articles on sale, which are mentioned only at the end of the advert in small print, it is the illustration evoking an exotic “Orient” that implicitly promises the customers a glimpse of Japan if they visit the shop.

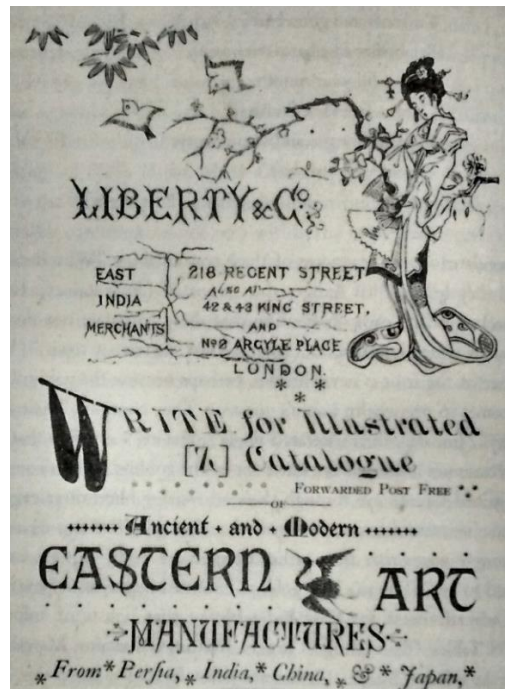


Figure 53 - Liberty & Co., *Advertisements*, c.1880. In Alison Adburgham, *Liberty's. A Biography of a Shop* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), 24.

Japanese Manufactured Articles in the Shops in the North East

Given that most of the shops that predominately lined the streets of the towns and villages in the North East of England and the objects that they sold are gone, this chapter again turns to a careful study of newspapers published in the North East between 1860 and 1913. As discussed by Oliver Lendrum, the second half of nineteenth century was a period in which the retail sector in the region had a great development due to the fact that many people “enjoyed increasing levels of disposable income,” including members of working and lower-middle class.⁷⁴³

⁷⁴² According to Adburgham, “the top part of this advertisement is similar to the Liberty & Co. bill heading.” Adburgham, *Liberty's*, 24.

⁷⁴³ Oliver Lendrum, “An Integrated Elite: Newcastle’s Economic Development 1840–1914,” Newcastle upon Tyne, edited by Robert Colls and Bill Lancaster (Chichester: Phillimore, 2001), 37-39. See also, Michael Barke and Peter J. Taylor, “Newcastle’s Long Nineteenth Century: A World-Historical Interpretation of Making a Multi-Nodal City Region,” *Urban History* 42, no. 1 (2015): 43–69.

Considering the interest stirred by Japan in the period under examination, it is no surprise that Japanese decorative objects were advertised by shopkeepers in almost every large town in the region but also in less populated areas, confirming that it was possible for consumers and collectors in the North East to easily acquire articles produced in Japan without travelling to London, or Paris. In total, I have identified 112 shops located in seventeen different cities, towns or villages that dealt in Japanese wares (Table 2).

Table 2 – Number of Shops that Advertised Japanese Decorative Objects in different towns throughout the North East per decade, 1860-1899.

	1860s	1870s	1880s	1890s	1900-1913	1860-1913*
Alnwick	0	3	2	0	0	5
Berwick	0	0	3	0	0	3
Bishop Auckland	0	0	1	1	1	3
Blyth	0	2	0	0	0	2
Darlington	0	3	3	2	1	6
Durham	4	4	4	1	0	9
Gateshead	0	0	1	0	0	1
Hexham	0	1	0	0	0	1
Jarrow	0	1	4	1	0	5
Middlesbrough	0	0	3	5	3	10
Morpeth	0	2	1	0	0	3
Newcastle	5	7	7	2	1	16
North Shields	1	3	2	0	0	6
South Shields	3	3	5	1	0	11
Stockton	0	1	3	3	2	6
Sunderland	3	7	13	6	7	23
West Hartlepool	0	0	2	0		2
TOTAL	16	37	54	22	15	112

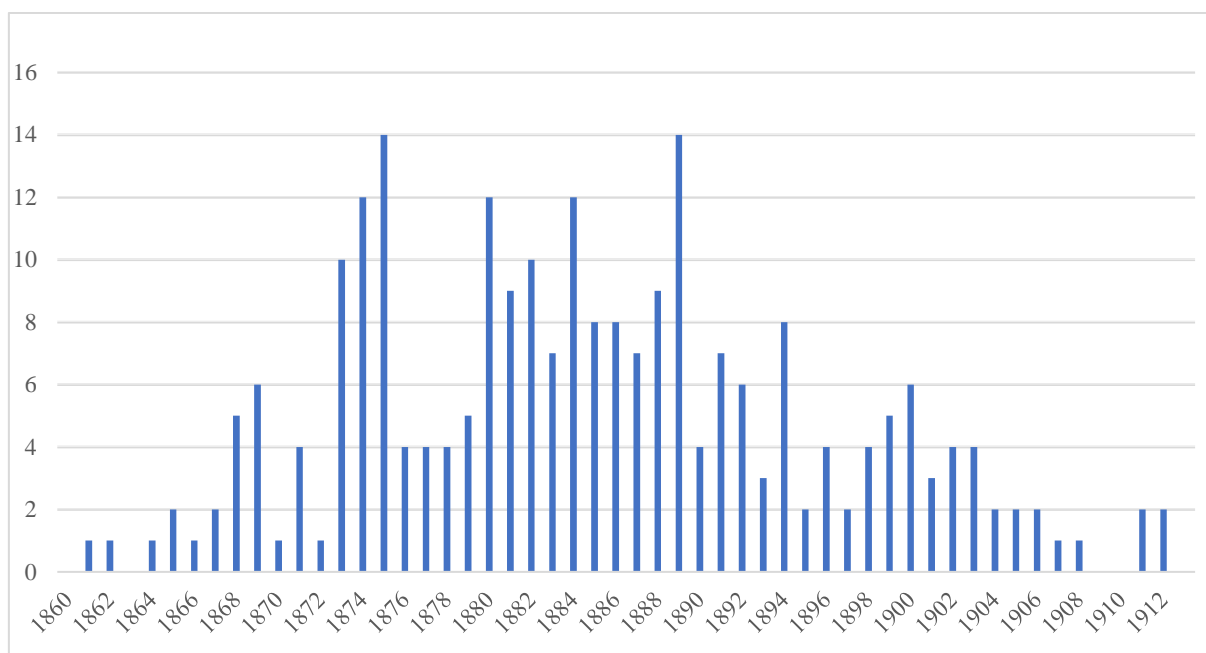
Sources: British Newspaper Archive. See Appendix G.

Note: Shops that advertised the sale of Japanese decorative objects in more than one decade are counted only once in the last column.

Elizabeth Aslin asserts that the 1880s represents the peak of interest in everything Japanese, this included the North East as in the rest of the UK. The detailed analysis of retail shops conducted in this focused regional study revealed that the period with the highest the number

of shops that sold Japanese articles was between 1873 and 1889, with two peaks, in 1875 and 1889, when 14 shops advertised Japanese imported articles (Graph 8).

Graph 8 - Shops that sold Japanese article per year in the North East of England.



Source: British Newspaper Archive. See Appendix G.

Regarding the former peak, it can be suggested that it was the result of the success of the Japan Court at the Vienna International Exposition of 1873, which was the first occurrence where a Japanese committee curated its pavilion independently. Moreover, as a result of the success achieved by the Japanese section, a trading company called Kiryu Kosho Kaisha was founded by the Japanese government in order to promote the export of Japanese manufactured articles in Europe and America.⁷⁴⁴ While there is no evidence that a shop in the North East had a direct relationship with this export company, various London firms such as The Alexandra Palace Company and Londos Company dealt with Kiryu Kosho Kaisha.⁷⁴⁵ As will be discussed, many retailers in the North East travelled to London to supply, so it is plausible that the Japanese trading company had, at least, an indirect influence.

⁷⁴⁴ Dōshin Satō, *Modern Japanese Art and the Meiji State: The Politics of Beauty* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), 96-136. See also, Gregory Irvine, “From Namban to Meiji: The Availability and Reception of Japanese Art in the West.” *Japonisme and the Rise of the Modern Art Movement*, edited by Gregory Irvine (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2013); Hiroko Yokomizo, “The Presentation and Reception of Japanese Art in Europe during the Meiji Period,” *Japonisme and the Rise of the Modern Art Movement: The Arts of the Meiji Period*, edited by Gregory Irvine (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2013).

⁷⁴⁵ Ayako Ono, *Japonisme in Britain: Whistler, Menpes, Henry, Hornel and Nineteenth-century Japan* (London, New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 12; MacKenzie, *Orientalism*, 128.

The second peak, in 1889, is more difficult to explain because in that decade the diffusion and appreciation of Japanese articles was already so widespread and had touched so many different aspects of Victorian visual and material culture. I speculate that it was partly a reflection of the numerous Japan-themed fairs and bazaars organised in the North East. From 1887 to 1889, fifteen Japanese bazaars or festivals were arranged in the region, an impressive amount considering that in the previous twenty years (1867-1886) the total was twenty-three. It can be speculated that shop owners, following the increasing popularity of Japan-themed events, decided to invest more in such business, and *vice versa*.

During the 1860s, shopkeepers advertised Japanese objects only in Newcastle, Durham, Sunderland, South Shields, and North Shields, while in the 1870s and 1880s, the number of towns in which it was possible to buy Japanese imports grew to twelve and fifteen respectively (Table 2). It is worth noting that Japanese decorative objects were not only advertised in those coastal towns having direct connections with Japan, such as Newcastle and Middlesbrough, but also in places holding no particular relationship with Japan located at the interior part of the region, such as Darlington, Morpeth and Hexham.

This geographical diversification suggests that the main attraction for retailers and consumers was probably the idea of following the new trend, rather than the direct influence of the economic relationship with Japan, which should therefore be considered a facilitator of this process, not a necessary condition. For example, a survey of regional newspapers found that twenty-three shops in Sunderland and sixteen shops in Newcastle represented the highest number of retailers of Japanese wares. Both were directly connected to Japan thanks to their renowned shipbuilding facilities, which led Japanese companies and the Japanese government to order steamers and warships from local shipyards.⁷⁴⁶ However, as Durham was revealed to have nine shops selling Japanese items and Darlington six, a strong international relationship was not necessary.

With regard to the size of premises, decorative objects manufactured in Japan were predominantly sold in shops with a single frontage (80%), instead of bigger stores formed of multiple adjacent lots. Single-business activities such as booksellers,⁷⁴⁷ decorators,⁷⁴⁸ cabinet

⁷⁴⁶ Marie Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England: From 1862 to the Present Day* (London: Athlone, 1989), 20-51.

⁷⁴⁷ Henry A. Yorke, South Shields. *Shields Daily News*, 14 May 1874, 2.

⁷⁴⁸ William Mossom & Son, Darlington. *Northern Echo*, 17 December 1884, 1.

makers⁷⁴⁹ and tea dealers,⁷⁵⁰ started to trade in Japanese decorative articles as early as the 1860s, showing a wide diversity among the retailers. Among large premises, draper shops were the most common throughout the period under examination. For example, in Newcastle John Milling began to sell Japanese silk as early as 1866,⁷⁵¹ followed by T. Robinson and Binns in Sunderland, from the middle of the 1870s.⁷⁵²

The first shop to be documented as selling Japanese wares was located in Durham and owned by George Andrews, a bookseller who in 1861 invited potential customers to come and buy “several articles of Japanese manufacture, including inlaid cabinets” (Figure 54).⁷⁵³ This brief description does not reveal how the inlaid cabinet came to be sold in a bookseller, but it is noteworthy that a shop in the North East began to sell Japanese articles even before the London Exposition in 1862. However, this occurrence was not the beginning of a stable business for Andrews, as he waited more than a decade before publishing another advertisement concerning Japanese objects.

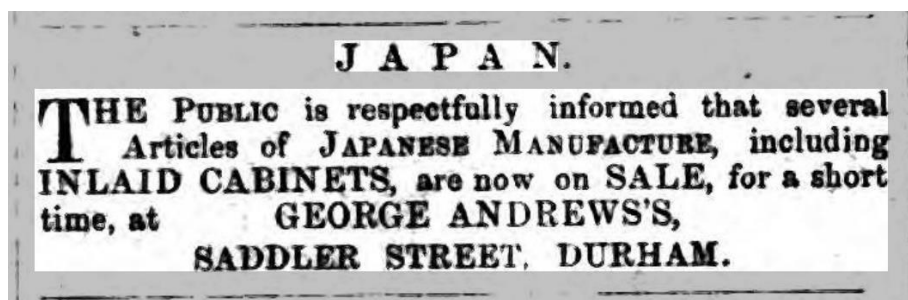


Figure 54 - George Andrews, *Durham County Advertiser*, 1 March 1861, 1.

This “back in business” was due to the help of an agent and intermediary. In the 1870s, Andrews came into contact with Alexander Wallace (1829-1899), an English botanist who worked for the New Plant and Bulb Company in Colchester as an “agent for new introduction of lilies and orchids.”⁷⁵⁴ According to an advert dated 1874 (Figure 55), Wallace was also an importer of Japanese works of art. Japanese flowers and in particular Japanese lilies were

⁷⁴⁹ Robertson Thomas & Sons, Alnwick. *Alnwick Mercury*, 6 December 1884, 1.

⁷⁵⁰ William Stewart, Newcastle. *Newcastle Journal*, 20 December 1869, 1.

⁷⁵¹ *Newcastle Journal*, 31 August 1866, 1.

⁷⁵² *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 16 November 1875, 1; *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 3 December 1875, 1. Despite in trade directories it was still listed as “draper,” Binns developed its business in a department store by the turn of the century Jon Stobart, “Cathedrals of Consumption? Provincial Department Stores in England, c.1880–1930,” *Enterprise & Society* 18, no. 4 (2017): 822.

⁷⁵³ *Durham County Advertiser*, 1 March 1860, 1.

⁷⁵⁴ Ray Desmond, ed. *Dictionary of British and Irish Botanists and Horticulturists Including Plant Collectors, Flower Painters and Garden Designers* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1994), 712.

appreciated in the North East, so it is not surprising that one of the people that introduced Japanese plant specimens in the country could occasionally deal in other art objects.⁷⁵⁵

MESSRS ANDREWS AND CO.,
64, SADDLER STREET, DURHAM
HAVE NOW ON SALE A VERY CHOICE SELECTION OF
JAPANESE WORKS OF ART,
Direct from the Importer, Dr. WALLACE, consisting of
Carved Ivories, Bronze and Enamelled Vases, Embroideries for Screens and Fans, Book of Prints, Porcelain, Bowls, Dishes, Dessert Plates, Cups and Saucers.
TO CONNOISSEURS.—JAPANESE CURIOS.
DR. WALLACE, of the New Plant and Bulb Company, Colchester, importer of JAPANESE CURIOS direct from Japan, will be at the COUNTY HOTEL, Durham, on FRIDAY and SATURDAY MORNING, with a choice selection of Carved Ivories, Paintings on Silk, Embroideries, Porcelain, and other choice objects of Japanese Art.

Figure 55 - George Andrews, *Durham County Advertiser*, 9 October 1874, 1.

Excepting George Andrews, very few retailers clearly stated in their advertisements where their Japanese decorative objects originated. An exception was made by M. Robinson of Stockton in 1896, who said that the new bamboo furniture he had on sale arrived directly from Japan.⁷⁵⁶ Other shops, such as J. Kirkley & Co. in South Shields,⁷⁵⁷ Blencowe in Newcastle,⁷⁵⁸ Johnston & Coxon in Durham,⁷⁵⁹ and Carter & Co. in Stockton mentioned explicitly or implicitly that they sourced Japanese articles from London. Carter & Co. is particularly interesting, because one of their notices published in 1891 tells of the ‘Special purchase of a portion of the stock of Messrs Mawe & Co. 5, 7, & 9, Farringdon Road, London, Japanese, Chinese, and East India Merchants, who are retiring of Business’.⁷⁶⁰ Mawe & Co. was owned by William Mawe and his son Frederic, and, following their acquisition of Holme & Co. in 1885, they came to possess warehouses in Yokohama and Kobe, as well as their London shop.⁷⁶¹

⁷⁵⁵ For example, in Newcastle flower shows there was a prize category called “Best Japan Lilly” in the early 1850s, *Newcastle Courant*, 13 September 1850; *Newcastle Courant*, 9 September 1853.

⁷⁵⁶ *Northern Echo*, 1 June 1896, 1.

⁷⁵⁷ *Shields Daily News*, 26 April 1867, 2.

⁷⁵⁸ *Newcastle Journal*, 7 July 1873, 1.

⁷⁵⁹ *Durham County Advertiser*, 7 May 1875, 1.

⁷⁶⁰ *Northern Echo*, 14 December 1891, 1.

⁷⁶¹ Regarding Mawe & Co., see, Tony Huberman et al., introduction to *The Diary of Charles Holme's 1889 Visit to Japan and North America with Mrs Lasenby Liberty's Japan: A Photographic Record*, edited by Tony Huberman, Sonia Ashmore and Yasuko Suga (Folkenstone: Global Oriental, 2008), xvi.

The rest of the local retailers studied did not reveal any specific information on from where they sourced their Japanese wares, a detail which contrasts with Clemens Wischermann's observations on foreign-goods advertising. According to Wischermann, since the early nineteenth century, when foreign goods began to be imported in massive quantity to Britain, providing information about the provenance of the product became essential, as well as communicating its availability and price.⁷⁶² Apparently, it was not a priority for the local retailers. On the one hand, it is plausible that by labelling an object on sale "Japanese," further geographical details were considered unnecessary; but on the other hand, it appears that shopkeepers seemed desirous to maintain an aura of mystery that was instrumental in nourishing the fictional stereotype of "Old" Japan. Concerning this point, Sarah Cheang, while discussing the cultural representation of China in British department stores at the turn of the century, has suggested that "to satisfy Western desires for the exotic, a sense of the mysterious needed to be preserved," but when this mysteriousness is lost, it is only "recoverable through the practice of nostalgia."⁷⁶³ It seems there was a very similar attitude towards Japan in the second half of the nineteenth century, and retailers in the North East played an important role in reinforcing this manufactured nostalgia for "Old" Japan in contrast to the economic relationship between Japan and the local shipyards that was threatening to tear down that veil of exotic mysteriousness.

Regarding the descriptions of Japanese decorative objects provided in advertisements, the overall picture is more diverse. On the one hand, there is a similar lack of detail provided, comparable to the scarcity of information on provenance. Around 40% of the local retailers studied used generic terms such as Japanese "curios," "goods," and "ornaments" in their newspaper advertisements, and almost half of them did not even specify in their notices *any* of the articles that they stocked, like T. Rutherford in Sunderland, who affirmed having "Japanese goods and fancy nick-nacks in profusion" to sell in 1881.⁷⁶⁴ The retailers using such generic terms were mostly occasional dealers of Japanese decorative objects, and they tended not to re-

⁷⁶² Clemens Wischermann, "Placing Advertising in the Modern Cultural History of the City," *Advertising and the European City: Historical Perspectives*, edited by Clemens Wischermann and Elliot Shore (Farnham: Aldershot, 2000), 8.

⁷⁶³ Sarah Cheang, "Selling China: Class, Gender and Orientalism at the Department Store," *Journal of Design History* 20, no. 1 (2007): 3.

⁷⁶⁴ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 19 December 1881, 1; 22 December 1881, 3.

advertise their sale of such products in local newspapers. This aspect suggests that in the North East merely mentioning “Japan” was often more than sufficient for attracting potential customers; or perhaps at that point, people already had a clear idea of what sort of objects they would find.

On the other hand, the few retailers that advertised Japanese decorative objects at least three or more times in the period under examination (17%) implemented the opposite strategy, offering instead as much detailed information as possible. Illustrative of this, is the manner in which Japanese pottery was described in various advertisements. From the early 1880s, Japanese ceramics grew to be so popular in the North East that it is not uncommon to read about porcelain identified only by its type, without mention of it being ‘Japanese’. Labels such as Imari, Satsuma, and Kaga [Kutani ware] were the most frequent to appear, but even specific manufactures such as Tamba-Tachikui ware, Miyakawa Kozan ware, Kishu ware, Awata ware, or more generic Tokyo ware, and Kyoto ware were included. This is exemplified by an advert for ceramics and glassware offered by Mawson, Swan & Morgan, which in 1882 listed seven different ceramic types below the hypernym “Japanese” (Figure 56).

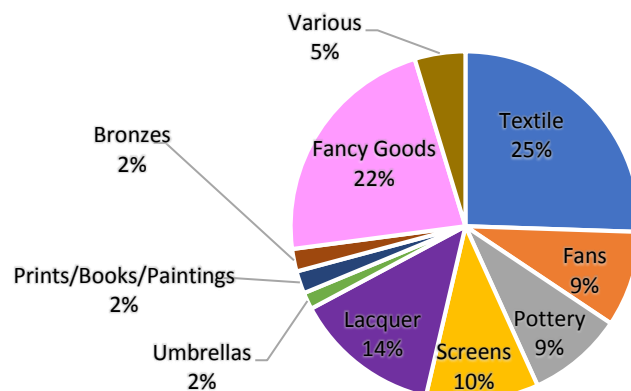
MAWSON, SWAN, AND MORGAN		
Are now offering at less than Manufacturer's Price, an elegant selection of		
ART POTTERY AND GLASS		
FOR A FEW DAYS ONLY.		
		Per Pair.
VASES—BLUE AND WHITE JAPANESE ..	6s 6d	for 4s 6d
VASES—DOULTON	63s 0d	“ 45s 0d
VASES—DOULTON	75s 0d	“ 52s 6d
VASES—DOULTON	75s 0d	“ 45s 0d
VASES—VALLAURIS	50s 0d	“ 33s 0d
VASES—VALLAURIS	18s 6d	“ 11s 3d
VASES—VALLAURIS	16s 0d	“ 12s 0d
VASES—BARBOTINE ..	47s 6d	“ 35s 0d
VASES—BARBOTINE ..	52s 6d	“ 40s 0d
VASES—BARBOTINE ..	77s 6d	“ 60s 0d
VASES—FRENCH FAIENCE	95s 0d	“ 70s 0d
VASES—JAPANESE	4s 0d	“ 2s 9d
VASES—KIOTO	27s 0d	“ 13s 0d
VASES—MINO	16s 6d	“ 12s 6d
VASES—KAGA	23s 0d	“ 21s 0d
VASES—TOKIO	30s 0d	“ 21s 0d
VASES—AWATA	37s 0d	“ 25s 0d
VASES—KISHUI	18s 6d	“ 11s 3d
VASES—LAQUERED	16s 6d	“ 11s 9d
VASES—IMARI	21s 0d	“ 15s 0d
VASES—BOHEMIAN GLASS	10s 6d	“ 7s 0d
VASES—BACCARAT GLASS	13s 0d	“ 9s 0d
VASES—DRESDEN ..	9s 6d	“ 7s 0d
VASES—WORCESTER	13s 0d	“ 9s 0d
VASES—LINTHORPE ..	50s 0d	“ 31s 6d
VASES—TERRA COTTA	10s 6d	“ 7s 6d

Figure 56 - Mawson, Swan & Morgan, Newcastle, *Newcastle Journal*, 3 April 1882, 1.

Japanese vases appear among those of British (Doulton, Worcester, Linthorpe), French (Vallauris, Barbotine, Baccarat), German (Dresden) and other European origin, with no attempt to order them geographically. Judith Neiswander has defined this approach as “cosmopolitan liberalism,” a concept inspired by John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), the influential Victorian philosopher.⁷⁶⁵ According to Neiswander, the idea of the domestic interior as a significant personal statement echoed Mill’s concept of “area of non-interference” in which “men and women were most free to be themselves.”⁷⁶⁶ Hence, displaying at home an eclectic combination of Western and foreign goods testified to the owner’s individual expression of aesthetic taste,⁷⁶⁷ as well as corroborating the concept of “nest” coined by Girouard. The fact that cosmopolitan liberalism was manifested even in the newspaper advertisements further confirms the strong link that tied retailing and consumption. The Japanese Shop in Darlington, established in 1889 by William Mossom (1847-1933), is another example of this cosmopolitan tendency as, despite its name, “British and Oriental Art Pottery” were sold in the shop.⁷⁶⁸

Unfortunately, the same attention to detail given to Japanese pottery was not extended to other kinds of decorative objects such as specimens of textiles, lacquerware, screens, and fans, even if their rate of occurrence in newspaper advertisements was higher than that of ceramics (Graph 9).

Graph 9 - Japanese imported articles sold in shops in the North East of England, 1860-1913.



Source: British Newspaper Archive. Appendix G.

⁷⁶⁵ Judith Neiswander, *The Cosmopolitan Interior: Liberalism and the British Home 1870-1914* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 39-42.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 48.

⁷⁶⁸ *Northern Echo*, 1 February 1889, 1.

Throughout the period under examination (1860-1913), Japanese textiles proved the most popular, but it was especially in the decade from 1863 to 1873 that draper shops became most active in selling this kind of object manufactured in Japan.⁷⁶⁹ This can be explained by outbreaks in that period of *pébrine*, a disease of silkworms which drastically reduced European and Chinese sericulture, forcing British textile manufacturers to find alternative importers.⁷⁷⁰ Japan was identified as a reliable supplier, to the point that during the 1860s, the export of Japanese silk met 20% of British demand for the fibre.⁷⁷¹ Silk and other textiles from Japan started to be advertised in regional newspapers from 1864, at Dunn & Co., Newcastle. According to the advert, the shop was selling Japanese “Clothes” from the previous year, so 1863 should be considered the actual initial date.⁷⁷² Soon after Dunn & Co. first advertised selling Japanese textiles and clothes, other shops started to sell Japanese textiles in towns such as Sunderland, Durham, North Shields and South Shields. In that decade, most of the shops that sold Japanese imported articles were drapers, and they were selling exclusively Japanese clothes,⁷⁷³ poplins,⁷⁷⁴ dresses,⁷⁷⁵ and silk.⁷⁷⁶

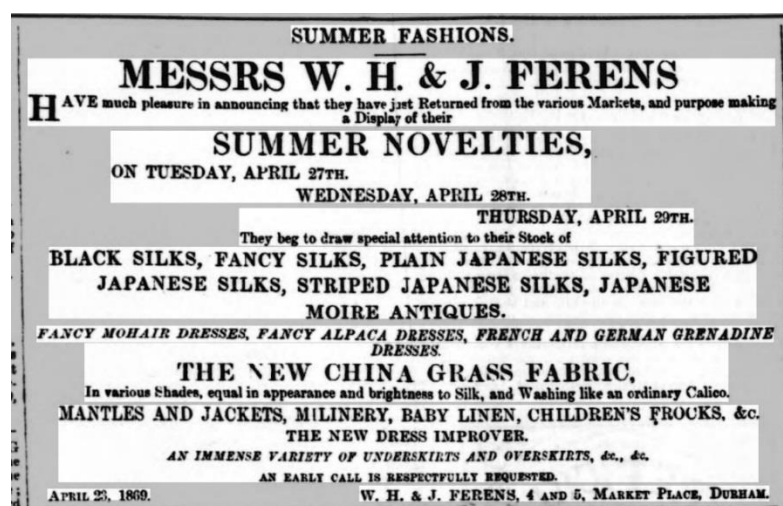


Figure 57 - W. H. & J. Ferens, *Durham County Advertiser*, 23 April 1869, 1.

⁷⁶⁹ Among the total of 24 shops which have been identified, 16 are draper shops which sold exclusively Japanese textile.

⁷⁷⁰ Claudio Zanier, “Japan and the ‘Pébrine’ Crisis of European Sericulture during the 1860s,” *Bonner Zeitschrift für Japanologie* 8 (1986): 51-63.

⁷⁷¹ Giovanni Federico, *An Economic History of the Silk Industry, 1830-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 32-34, 76.

⁷⁷² *Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury*, 23 January 1864, 1.

⁷⁷³ Shields & Co., Durham, *Durham County Advertiser*, 20 October 1865, 1;

⁷⁷⁴ “Japanese Poplins in the Newest designs,” Jno. W. Kirkley, South Shields, *Shields Daily News*, 26 April 1867, 2; Joseph Green & Co., *Shields Daily News*, 23 May 1868, 2.

⁷⁷⁵ “Japanese dresses,” G. D. Lightford, South Shields, *Shields Daily Gazette*, 26 April 1869, 1.

⁷⁷⁶ “Japanese Silk in all colours,” W. H. & J. Ferens, Durham, *Durham County Advertiser*, 1 May 1868, 1; “Rich Japanese silk dresses,” J. Edgar & Co., *Shields Daily Gazette*, 24 July 1869, 2.

The most interesting of these drapers is the shop owned by W. H. & J. Ferens who in 1869 advertised an impressive quantity of Japanese silks, both in plain colours then fully decorated (Figure 57). From the early 1880s, Japanese textiles started to appear less often in newspapers, but it never lost its market, as we can see in a photograph dated around 1900 of the linen department of the Robinson's Havelock House, Sunderland (Figure 58).



Figure 58 - George Robinson's Havelock House, Sunderland, c.1900. Sunderland Antiquarian Society, Sunderland. I am thankful to Phil Curtis for this photograph.

In newspaper advertisements, Japanese textiles were also the only category that was listed the majority of times on its own (61%), rather than together with other Japanese imported articles, or with generic terms. This demonstrates that Japanese textiles were one of the first articles that achieved a sort of “commercial independence” from other Japanese objects. In other words, for Japanese silk and linen, there was a specific demand and many shops (mostly drapers) sold them independently to the other popular Japanese articles such as lacquerware, fans, screens and pottery. As discussed by Elizabeth Kramer:

Textiles are a medium with which people across class, gender, and ethnic borders interact, and the diverse uses of Japanese or Anglo-Japanese textiles, including clothing, upholstery, drapery and needlework set them apart from other Japanese art objects.⁷⁷⁷

This adaptability is confirmed by the fact that not all the specimens of Japanese silk reached the British market already decorated. A plain Japanese silk could be used to fabricate any kind

⁷⁷⁷ Elizabeth Kramer, “Art, Industry and Design: The Role of Japanese and Anglo-Japanese Textiles in Victorian Britain, 1862-1900,” PhD Thesis (University of Manchester, 2004), 23.

of garment which would not explicitly refer to Japan, for example, a bridesmaid's dress to wear at a wedding ceremony.⁷⁷⁸

With regard to other Japanese objects, the lack of details provided in newspaper advertisements suggests that regional retailers' strategy was to simply inform their client about the availability of Japanese goods in their shops, relying on consumer fascination with Japan. This, however, should not be considered exclusively as a mere, passive attitude because, as suggested by Cynthia Brandimarte in her analysis of the American context, shop owners who sold Japanese articles satisfied "a taste for 'foreign goods' and succeeded so well that the taste soon became mainstream."⁷⁷⁹

The fact that only certain types of Japanese goods, such as specimens of lacquerware, screens, and fans, began to be increasingly advertised around the late 1870s opens the discussion about the active role played by retailers in the North East in spreading the fascination with Japan to a mainstream audience exclusively with regard to such decorative articles. For example, lacquerware was the first type of Japanese object to be advertised in the early 1860s, and it became common to find retailers in smaller centres such as Berwick,⁷⁸⁰ Hexham⁷⁸¹ or Jarrow⁷⁸² selling specimens of this renowned Japanese manufacture only two decades later. In the major urban centres of the region, expensive examples such as lacquered cabinets began to appear alongside more affordable pieces such as trays⁷⁸³ and boxes for gloves or handkerchiefs.⁷⁸⁴ The same pattern occurred for Japanese screens, which started to appear in advertisements from the late 1870s.⁷⁸⁵ By the 1880s screens began to be mentioned in every town of the region with ever increasing frequency.⁷⁸⁶ In a very few cases, advertisements also described the decoration

⁷⁷⁸ "The bridesmaids were dressed in silver grey Japanese silks, [...]" *Northern Echo*, 14 August 1874, 4.

⁷⁷⁹ Cynthia A. Brandimarte, "Japanese Novelties Store," *Winterthur Portfolio*, 26:1 (1991) 25.

⁷⁸⁰ R. Cairns & Son, *Berwickshire News and General Advertiser*, 21 November 1882, 2; Robert C. Steven, *Berwickshire News and General Advertiser*, 1 January 1889, 1.

⁷⁸¹ Parker, *Hexham Courant*, 2 August 1879, 8.

⁷⁸² J. Routledge, *Jarrow Express*, 17 December 1886, 3; Green & Byers, *Jarrow Express*, 16 December 1887, 3.

⁷⁸³ J & H. Harrison, Newcastle, *Newcastle Journal*, 20 December 1875, 1; F. E. Ward & Co., Darlington, *Northern Echo*, 12 December 1887; Collison & Son, Durham, *Durham County Advertiser*, 6 December 1889, 1.

⁷⁸⁴ Turnbull & Co., Sunderland, *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 11 December 1877, 1; Griggs, North Shields, *Shields Daily News*, 19 December 1885, 2; John Headley & Co., Middlesbrough, *Northern Echo*, 1 December 1888, 7.

⁷⁸⁵ Harrison, Sunderland, *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 20 December 1879, 3.

⁷⁸⁶ Among the many: Robson & Sons, Newcastle, *Newcastle Journal*, 16 December 1882, 1; Thomas Robertson & Sons, Alnwick, *Alnwick Mercury*, 6 December 1884, 1; Mark Robinson, Durham, *Durham County Advertiser*, 4 December 1885, 1; Green & Byers, North Shields, *Shields Daily News*, 13 December 1886, 3.

of the panels, for example, “handsomely embroidered [...] black and gold”⁷⁸⁷ or consisting of “leather-paper.”⁷⁸⁸ Among the ways in which screens were advertised, it is interesting to note the strategy chosen by the Giant Furnishing Emporium in Bishop Auckland (Figure 59). Here Japanese screens are not recommended for their aesthetic refinement, rather their hygienic quality in helping to prevent influenza. The use of a theme such as the fear of sickness could be surprising, as Richards demonstrated, late Victorian consumers were extremely sensitive about health and hygiene.⁷⁸⁹

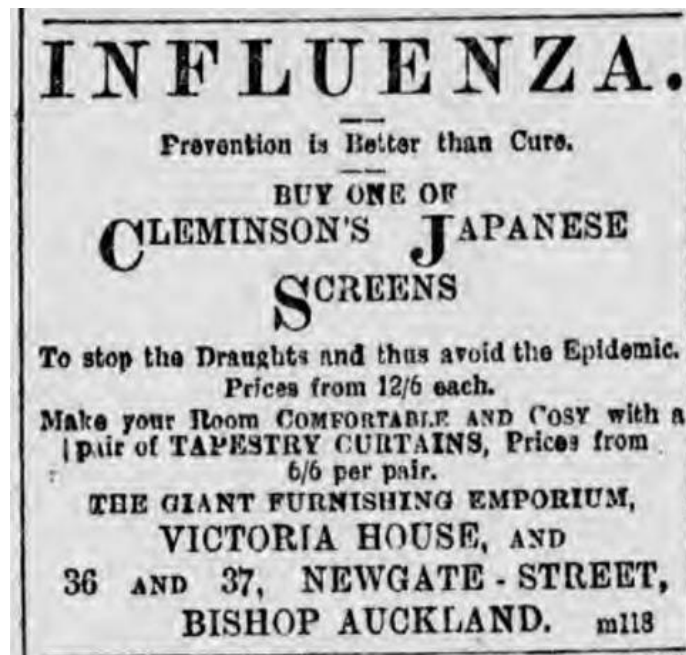


Figure 59 - Giant Furnishing Emporium, Bishop Auckland, *Northern Echo*, 26 December 1891, 1.

Japanese fans were one of the cheapest articles available, and it is very difficult to estimate the great numbers of them sold with any accuracy as they were also widely available in temporary street stalls, from which both men and women purchased them when seeking momentary relief from the summer heat.⁷⁹⁰ Newspapers published in small towns such as Jarrow certified already in 1879 that “Japan is very much the fashion right now. Japanese fans are in every house.”⁷⁹¹ Retailers in the North East promoted this collecting practice, and Thomas Beardall in Sunderland, for example, advertised in the early 1880s “a lot of Japanese Palm Fans at one

⁷⁸⁷ T. Jones, Middlesbrough, *Northern Echo*, 3 December 1892, 2.

⁷⁸⁸ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 30 November 1889, 1.

⁷⁸⁹ Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*, 168-204.

⁷⁹⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 22 July 1881, 5;

⁷⁹¹ *Jarrow Express*, 4 July 1879, 5.

halfpenny each.”⁷⁹² According to the numerous donation in regional museums,⁷⁹³ it is possible to suggest that Japanese fans were particularly popular and convenient also for decorating their house, as in some cases they cost just one penny, making them something to suit every purse.⁷⁹⁴ It is no surprise that in the following decades “Japanese fans for decoration” were on sale at John Milling & Co. in Newcastle.⁷⁹⁵

Other Japanese imports such as Japanese bronzes, prints, and umbrellas were less widely advertised in the local newspapers. This could suggest that retailers in the North East recognized that the appeal of these types of objects among consumers at large in the region was limited. For example, only George Andrews in Durham,⁷⁹⁶ and Alexander Corder⁷⁹⁷ and W. Greenwell⁷⁹⁸ in Sunderland are named as the retailers who sold Japanese bronzes. In a similar manner, Japanese printed materials were sold only by Henry A. York, a bookseller in South Shields, who advertised Japanese illustrated books only on two occasions throughout the period under examination.⁷⁹⁹ More specifically, despite their popularity among British painters, illustrators, designers, and art collectors, specimens of *ukiyo-e* [Japanese woodblock prints] were never explicitly mentioned.⁸⁰⁰ In contrast, Japanese umbrellas and parasols appeared in newspaper advertisements a little more often, especially in the 1880s.⁸⁰¹ Considering that the aforementioned Japanese objects were not uncommon in auction sale catalogues,⁸⁰² and private donations to museums,⁸⁰³ it is possible that three types of articles were simply not considered by retailers as appealing as the lacquerware, screens, or fans on local, generic consumers.

⁷⁹² *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 8 June 1882, 1.

⁷⁹³ In this regard, see the Japanese fan collection held in the Discovery Museum, Newcastle Upon Tyne.

⁷⁹⁴ *Alnwick Mercury*, 4 September 1880, 2; *Shields Daily News*, 20 July 1881, 2.

⁷⁹⁵ *Northern Echo*, 1 December 1894, 1.

⁷⁹⁶ *Durham County Advertiser*, 9 October 1874, 1.

⁷⁹⁷ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 4 December 1888, 2.

⁷⁹⁸ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 13 December 1898, 3.

⁷⁹⁹ *Shields Daily News*, 14 May 1874, 2; *Shields Daily News*, 16 December 1880, 2. In the latter, York mentioned a “Micado [sic] Album.”

⁸⁰⁰ The only descriptions that could be put in relation with Japanese woodblock prints are: “Book of prints” by George Andrews, *Durham County Advertiser*, 9 October 1874; and “Immense quantity of Art Prints [...] Japanese,” by George Henry Robinson in 1882, *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 3 June 1882, 1.

⁸⁰¹ John Milling, Newcastle, *Shields Daily News*, 21 December 1880, 1; Carter & Co., Stockton, *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, July 1883, 1; Alexander Corder, Sunderland, *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 3 April 1902, 1.

⁸⁰² North East auction sale catalogues are discussed in the next chapter.

⁸⁰³ For example, a large collection of Japanese *ukiyo-e* formed in the early twentieth century is now held at the Laing Art Gallery, donated by Albert Higginbottom. Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 70-73.

Among the 112 shops identified as advertising Japanese objects in the North East, only a few of these consistently advertised Japanese goods in local newspapers during the second half of the nineteenth century. The majority of regional retailers were mostly occasional dealers of Japanese decorative objects, and they tended not to re-advertise the sale of such objects in local newspapers. The average selling duration of the 112 shops is two years because, in most of the cases, retailers advertised the same stock around the turn of the year.⁸⁰⁴ As Christmas time was the most crucial period for this kind of business,⁸⁰⁵ most of the retailers advertised firstly in December, when the Japanese stock arrived, and later in January or February of the following year, in order to sell out the remaining articles.

The only two retailers who continuously advertised the sale of Japanese manufactured objects were Alexander Corder in Sunderland and William Mossom in Darlington.⁸⁰⁶ These two commercial initiatives were named, respectively, Mikado Bazaar, which lasted from 1885 to 1904, and Japanese Shop, documented from 1889-1893. Corder and Mossom had already dealt in Japanese objects before they established these new businesses, thus their decision was probably led from a careful analysis of their respective local market and by a desire to profit from the widespread enthusiasm in Japanese wares that had taken hold by the 1880s.

Mikado Bazaar

Alexander Corder (1831-1924) was a draper, whose career commenced in 1856 when he opened a shop at Sunderland's High Street West in the Hutchinson's Buildings. In 1884, he moved his business to another part of the town, 21 Fawcett Street, and into a multi-floored premises, which he managed with his sons.⁸⁰⁷ 1884 was also the year when the name of his company was changed from "Mr. Alexander Corder" to "Messrs Alexander Corder and Sons," confirming his sons' entry into the family business.⁸⁰⁸ However, only in the 1890s did the names of Robert Watson (1860-1930) and Herbert (1864-1837), two of Corder's sons, appear for the first time in advertising material.⁸⁰⁹ It is therefore not entirely clear when precisely management of the

⁸⁰⁴ The exact result is 2.13 years.

⁸⁰⁵ Victorian Christmas shopping and gender differences are explored in Christopher Hosgood, "'Doing the shops' at Christmas: Women, Men and the Department Store in England, c.1880-1914," *Cathedrals of Consumption: European Department Stores, 1850-1939*, edited by Geoffrey Crossick and Serge Jaumain (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 97-115.

⁸⁰⁶ The shop owned by George Andrews in Durham advertised Japanese objects in 1861, and later in 1870s and 1880s, but with inconsistency.

⁸⁰⁷ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 7 January 1884, 1; 21 November 1884, 1.

⁸⁰⁸ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 21 November 1884, 1.

⁸⁰⁹ *Durham County Advertiser*, 18 October 1895, 5; *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 13 December 1898, 3.

shop passed into the sons' hands, or whether the Mikado Bazaar was an initiative of the sons or of the father. The only information hinting that Alexander Corder alone was behind the Mikado Bazaar is the fact that, whenever they were mentioned, both Robert and Herbert were associated with other departments of the shop. The limited amount of information available does not allow a concrete definition of Corder's shop as a department store following James Jefferys' categorisation;⁸¹⁰ however, it is worth pointing out that his business resembles what Bill Lancaster has called a "proto-department store," namely a draper who expanded "beyond the traditional trade stock of textile pieces."⁸¹¹

While Corder first advertised the sale of Japanese imported goods in 1873,⁸¹² the Mikado Bazaar was established only in 1885, and ceases to be mentioned in local newspapers after 1904.⁸¹³ The name Mikado Bazaar itself reveals a clear intention to link the shop with the general interest in everything Japanese, as well as exploiting the popularity achieved by William S. Gilbert and Arthur S. Sullivan's comic operetta *The Mikado*, which premiered in March 1885 in London and a few months later opened in Newcastle.⁸¹⁴ These two circumstances were inextricably bound, as the instant success of *The Mikado* was mainly due to the widespread appreciation of Japanese decorative objects in the 1880s and the operetta fuelled the interest in such objects. While Alexander Corder dealt in Japanese and other exotic goods from 1873, it wasn't until 1884 that he established a department within his shop named the "Eastern bazaar."⁸¹⁵ The following year, right after the arrival of Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta in the North East, he changed the name to "Mikado Bazaar."⁸¹⁶ Initially intended to be a seasonal business supplying novel Christmas gifts, like so many other initiatives which involved the sale of Japanese articles in the majority of retailers in the North East, Corder closed the Mikado Bazaar in early 1886, however, its success led the shop owner to re-open it in March of 1886 and it became a permanent department until the early twentieth century.⁸¹⁷ Between 1888 and 1890, the shop and its Mikado Bazaar operated from 62 Fawcett Street after a fire at 21 Fawcett

⁸¹⁰ James Jefferys, *Retail Trading in Britain, 1850–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954).

⁸¹¹ Bill Lancaster, *The Department Store: A Social History* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1995), 7-8.

⁸¹² *Shields Daily Gazette*, 11 June 1873, 4.

⁸¹³ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 12 December 1885, 1; 29 November 1904, 1.

⁸¹⁴ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 65-66.

⁸¹⁵ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 21 November 1884, 1.

⁸¹⁶ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 12 December 1885, 1.

⁸¹⁷ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 16 March 1886, 1.

Street. When the latter was rebuilt, after a design by local architect Frank Caws, the shop returned to its previous site.⁸¹⁸

Despite its name, the Mikado Bazaar sold many non-Japanese articles. Chinese, Indian, and even European goods were part of the department's catalogue, which maintained the cosmopolitan liberalism promoted by Corder's. Such a range of stock was far from unusual at that time in British department stores and more specialist retailers – both in the capital and regionally –, as evidenced by Liberty & Co. in London, or Mawson, Swan & Morgan in the North East.



Figure 60 - Alexander Corder, *Shields Daily Gazette*, 11 June 1873, 1.

With regard to Japanese objects, since Alexander Corder was a draper, it is no surprise that the first Japanese item that he sold was Japanese silk in 1873 (Figure 60), while a more diverse range of items was described only from the end of that decade.⁸¹⁹ While in the 1870s it appears

⁸¹⁸ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 18 November 1889, 2; Michael Johnson, *Sunderland in 50 Buildings* (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2016), 50-51.

⁸¹⁹ *Shields Daily Gazette*, 11 June 1873, 4.

that Corder continued to sell exclusively textiles and garments,⁸²⁰ from 1877, he started to advertise other kinds of Japanese objects as well, such as lacquered trays and boxes.⁸²¹ From the early 1880s, Japanese screens, pottery, fans, umbrellas, bronzes, *kakemono* [hanging wall-pictures, usually of silk or paper], and picture books were included in the advertisements, making Corder's "oriental" department, one of a few places in the North East where it was possible to buy most of the types of Japanese articles so appreciated by Victorians for decorating their house (Figure 61).

CHRISTMAS, 1888.

M I K A D O B A Z A A R .
LATEST SHIPMENTS OF
EASTERN ART OBJECTS.

Japanese Bronzes and Jurois.
Kaga, Satsuma, and Imari Pottery.
Awari, Banko, and Kishui Vases.
Turkish and Damascus Hanging Lamps.
Benares Hand-wrought Brass Work.
Cashmere Hand-wrought Copper Work.
Japanese Hand-Painted and Embroidered Folding
Screens.
Kakemonos, Hand Screens and Fans.
Cairo Folding Stands & Bamboo Art Furniture.
Chinese Gongs and Lanterns
Immense Variety of Japanese Toys.

**LARGE CONSIGNMENT OF
ANTIQUÉ AND MODERN EASTERN RUGS.**

Koula Mats	7s 9d each
Kurd Rugs	11s 6d "
Koula Rugs	18s 6d "
Deccan Rugs.....	18s 6d "
Laodicean Rugs	9s 6d "

Fine Antique Daghestan Rugs and Prayer Carpets,
from 4s 6d to 8 Guineas each,
Indian Dhurries, from 1s 9d each.
Bouladere and Syrian Curtains, Embroidered
Aleppo Table Covers.

ALEX. CORDER & SON,
62 FAWCETT STREET,
(Opposite Queen's Hotel),
SUNDERLAND.

Telegrams Corder,
Sunderland. Telephone 343.

Figure 61 - Alex Corder & Sons, Sunderland, Shields Daily News, 4 December 1888, 1.

It is interesting to underline that Japanese porcelain, in particular, received a lot of attention from Corder, and from the first advertisement in 1881 onward, he detailed the specific style of each group of pieces on sale.⁸²² Among the many, "Imari" was the most frequently mentioned, followed by Kaga (Kutani ware), Satsuma, Sanda (Tamba-Tachikui ware), Kozaro (Miyakawa

⁸²⁰ "Japanese costume, ... Japanese skirts," *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 22 April 1875, 1.

⁸²¹ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 17 December 1880, 1.

⁸²² *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 8 December 1881, 1.

Kozan ware), Kishui (Kishu ware), Unshui (Awata ware). By providing such detail in his advertisements, Corder was attempting to establish a reputation as a knowledgeable trader of genuinely “oriental” articles. Like other regional retailers, Corder confronted the issue of authenticity by particularising the types of Japanese objects on sale, but avoided any discussion of the provenance of his stock.

Other types of Japanese articles were rarely mentioned in such detail. The few exceptions occurred for Japanese screens, which were described as consisting of “hand-embroidery with gold and silk,”⁸²³ being “hand-painted,”⁸²⁴ constructed of “leather-paper,”⁸²⁵ or as “with painted art linen backs.”⁸²⁶ As the rest of his stock was described generically, it might be that Corder felt it necessary to present his catalogue of Japanese pottery more specifically because his potential customers in the North East had some familiarity with the distinctions between pottery types, but not with Japanese lacquerware, paintings, etc.

The limited information in Corder’s advertisements on the provenance of the Japanese decorative objects that he was selling allows for the possibility that he did not import directly from Japan, but instead relied on British or perhaps European agents, even though he often called himself an “oriental importer.”⁸²⁷ In some advertisements, Corder proudly declares that he has received goods from Bombay and Constantinople, but on no occasion does he mention any Japanese locations.⁸²⁸ The most plausible origin remains the national or the European market, and the network of agents of Liberty & Co. were probably the main suppliers to Corder of Japanese decorative objects. The co-operation between Corder and Liberty & Co. is testified by the many advertisements in which Corder declares himself the sole agent of Liberty in the North East.⁸²⁹ Unfortunately, Corder never alluded to Japanese products in relation to his dealings with Liberty. In 1891, another newspaper article states that ‘consequent upon the

⁸²³ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 15 December 1885, 1.

⁸²⁴ *Shields Daily Gazette*, 4 December 1888, 1.

⁸²⁵ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 3 December 1889, 1.

⁸²⁶ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 12 May 1892, 1.

⁸²⁷ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 21 November 1884, 1; 10 November 1887, 1; 27 March 1888, 1; 25 August 1890, 1; 5 October 1891; 10 December 1894; 26 February 1898.

⁸²⁸ “Indian inlaid goods and brass work, imported direct from Bombay,” *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 24 November 1886, 1; “Messrs Corder have received from their agent in Constantinople an extensive consignment of Daghistan and Persian rugs of rare beauty of design and finish,” *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 20 December 1886, 6.

⁸²⁹ The collaboration between Corder and Liberty is mentioned the first time in 1882, but it is not clear how long it lasted, probably until the early twentieth century. *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 6 December 1882, 1; 27 April 1895, 1.

retirement of certain well-known dealers in Yokohama and London, Messrs Corder' bought a large number of Japanese articles.⁸³⁰ The 'well-known dealers' were probably Mawe & Co., and the fact that Corder took advantage of this kind of opportunity might signify that he still relied on British-based suppliers even in the early 1890s.⁸³¹ In short, it seems unlikely that Corder developed a direct network in Japan, since he could certainly be well enough supplied through his dealings with Liberty & Co. and Mawe & Co to make this unnecessary.

As was the case with the other retailers in the North East, the absence of accurate details with regard to the provenance of Japanese decorative objects might have been a deliberate attempt to forestall any mental association with the less quaintly appealing "New" Japan, focusing on the popularity of themes associated with the fictional "Old" Japan. As already discussed with regard to travel literature, entertaining spectacles, and charity bazaars, the pre-modern representation of Japan was paradoxically perceived as more "authentic" among the generic public, and Japanese decorative arts had been instrumental in introducing this nostalgic idea of the country in Britain since the London International Exposition in 1862. This objectivation of Japan, its people, and its culture was further popularised by the opening chorus of *The Mikado*, which has been cited by many scholars, but is particularly relevant in the case of the Mikado Bazaar:

If you want to know who we are,
We are gentlemen of Japan:
On many a vase and jar –
On many a screen and fan.
We figure in lively paint:
Our attitude's queer and quaint –
You're wrong if you think it ain't, oh!⁸³²

This stereotypical image of the Japanese clearly owed much to the success of Japanese decorative objects, which in the 1880s were displayed in almost every middle-class Victorian household. Inversely, Corder and other retailers all over the UK were able to take some advantage of the enormous popularity of Gilbert and Sullivan's musical. Just mentioning "Japan" or the "Japanese" when advertising decorative objects for the home was enough to stimulate interest, and the popular representation of that country was inextricably linked to the consumption of Japanese imported articles. This mutual benefit between entertaining spectacles

⁸³⁰ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 16 December 1891, 1.

⁸³¹ I suggest that the 'well-known dealer' could be identified with the same Mawe & Co. mentioned the same week by Carter & Co. See note 761.

⁸³² William Schwenck Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, *The Complete Annotated Gilbert and Sullivan*, edited by Ian Bradley (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 559.

and retailing practices perfectly exemplifies what has been theorised by Appadurai. By taking advantage of the British fascination with the fictional, pre-modern Japan, Corder simultaneously sent and received messages regarding the social values attributed to the commodified and stereotyped vision of the country such as beauty, exoticism, and novelty.

The commodified image of the “Old” Japan was further exploited by Corder in a multifaceted and cosmopolitan shopping experience. As various scholars have observed, in the late Victorian period, shopping as a leisure activity was not bound to the act of buying.⁸³³ The Mikado Bazaar’s arrangement of its stock evidences this with the promise to customers of a spectacle, a strategy firstly developed by French department stores in the 1850s.⁸³⁴ Through a series of newspaper articles describing Corder’s shop throughout the period under examination, it is possible to partially reconstruct the appearance of the Mikado Bazaar. However, it cannot be excluded that these articles were sponsored by Corder, as their tone is generally and conspicuously enthusiastic. Accordingly, rather than impartial descriptions, they should be considered part of the same narrative of the advertising discourse developed by Corder.

Firstly, Corder arranged a display that was termed an ‘attraction’, which had the further advantage of not requiring a ticket to enter.⁸³⁵ In 1885, the year that the Mikado Bazaar opened, the department was said to be ‘amongst the leading attractions of that thoroughfare’, and to boast ‘there is a magnificent display of gold and silver embroidered screens, Venetian glass, and Oriental pottery and porcelain [...] altogether the show is considered one of the finest out of London’.⁸³⁶ The screens mentioned were surely Japanese, as they are listed in an advertisement published six days before.⁸³⁷ Again, exotic goods were displayed in close proximity to those European in origin, creating a refined, cosmopolitan arrangement worthy of admiration in itself.

Corder also understood that the popularity of Japanese aesthetics in the UK was tied up with the concept of escapism, a nostalgic feeling which was generally associated with the consumption of exoticised images of foreign countries, and its natural concomitant, “virtual travelling.” An article in a local newspaper dated 1891 reports that he:

⁸³³ Erika Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

⁸³⁴ Lancaster, *The Department Store*, 17.

⁸³⁵ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 16 December 1891, 2.

⁸³⁶ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 18 December 1885, 3.

⁸³⁷ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 12 December 1885, 1.

seized the opportunity to transplant a veritable piece of Japan to their Fawcett-street emporium, and the visitor [...] needs no help of the imagination to fancy himself in the native land of Sir Edward [sic] Arnold's "No" Dance, instead of amid the prosaic surroundings of Sunderland.⁸³⁸

According to another article published in 1894, more than a simple spectacle, Corder successfully arranged a multisensory experience in which "all the nations of the Orient are represented, and, wandering in an atmosphere laden with Eastern perfumes, one can hardly imagine that we are still in Sunderland."⁸³⁹ Exactly as proposed by Krista Lysack in regard to Liberty's, at the Mikado Bazaar the people were first of all "tourists of their own desires."⁸⁴⁰

In the late 1890s, the anxiety that Japan was becoming a militaristic and economic power with which to be reckoned further enforced the stereotype of "Old" Japan. Following the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), in which for the first time Japan showed the world what its modern fleet was capable of, the Mikado Bazaar was styled as "a veritable fairyland."⁸⁴¹ According to Toshio Yokoyama, the idealisation of Japan as an "fairyland" arose in the mid-1870s.⁸⁴² That this idea persisted until the very end of the nineteenth century further demonstrates how deep-rooted it was in the minds of North-easterners, aware as they might well have been that the Japanese Navy's defeat of China was aided by the warships ordered from Elswick shipyard in Newcastle.

Offering his customers a virtual journey to another country without leaving Sunderland was central to the strategy developed by Corder, as demonstrated by the Mikado Bazaar's placement within his shop. From its creation, the department was located in the basement of the main building at 21 Fawcett Street, in a room 20 metres long and 10 metres wide.⁸⁴³ The decision to situate the Mikado Bazaar in the basement was perhaps aimed at intriguing clientele, who could imagine that by descending below ground level, they were entering another world, and stepping into the kind of "veritable fairyland" mentioned in the newspaper article. It is possible that Corder took inspiration from Liberty & Co. in this matter, as their Eastern Bazaar at Chesham House, where Japanese and Chinese antiques were displayed, was located in the basement.⁸⁴⁴ When Corder moved temporarily to 62 Fawcett Street from 1888 to 1890, he relocated his

⁸³⁸ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 16 December 1891, 2.

⁸³⁹ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 12 November 1894, 1

⁸⁴⁰ Lysack, *Come Buy, Come Buy*, 35.

⁸⁴¹ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 13 December 1898, 3.

⁸⁴² Toshio Yokoyama, *Japan in the Victorian Mind: A Study of Stereotyped Images of a Nation, 1850-80* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987), 170-175.

⁸⁴³ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 21 December 1887, 6.

⁸⁴⁴ Adburgham, *Liberty's*, 43.

bazaar to a “lighter and loftier situation,” and so probably on an upper or topmost floor. However, apparently unsatisfied, he resituated the Mikado Bazaar in the basement upon returning the shop to its previous address.⁸⁴⁵ It could be argued that an environment with less exposure to natural light better served Corder’s purpose, by allowing him to set the degree of illumination in accordance with the atmosphere that he wanted to create. Additionally, the presence of windows which faced the streets of Sunderland might have been a distraction from the experience intended by Corder.

Japanese Shop

While the Mikado Bazaar in Sunderland demonstrates how national and global trends can be seen in the North East of England and how such shops become mediators disseminating cultural phenomena for the local community; the Japanese Shop in Darlington reflects the complementary tendency, namely the local community’s impact over retailers’ decision to establish a new business involving Japanese themes.



Figure 62 - William Mossom, *Northern Echo*, 1 February 1933, 7.

⁸⁴⁵ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 14 December 1892, 2.

William Mossom (1847-1933) was part of a family of “housepainters, paperhangers, and art decorators” (Figure 62).⁸⁴⁶ In the late 1870s, he replaced his father in managing the family shop at 82 Bondgate in Darlington,⁸⁴⁷ and later oversaw the subsidiaries in Stockton-on-Tees and Saltburn-by-the-Sea.⁸⁴⁸ The few biographical notes obtained from his obituary describe him as a trained painter and decorator, and they lend to the supposition that Mossom was aware of the major artistic trends in Europe, as he “travelled extensively and had visited most European countries” in his younger age.⁸⁴⁹ Even before the opening of the Japanese Shop in 1889, William Mossom sold Japanese manufactured articles.



Figure 63 - William Mossom, *Northern Echo*, 17 December 1884, 1.

There is little evidence to support any speculation about how Mossom sourced his shop of Japanese articles. In 1884 an advertisement for William Mossom & Son mentions the availability of “a large stock of Japanese and other Eastern pottery ware” (Figure 63); while in the following years, “Japanese goods”⁸⁵⁰ and Japanese “novelties”⁸⁵¹ are advertised. This lack of description does not allow for the assessment of whether he was competent about Japanese manufactured objects, however, considering that he was an “art decorator” of that period, it is plausible that he was at the very least aware of the success of Japanese manufactured objects in

⁸⁴⁶ *Northern Echo*, 17 December 1884, 1.

⁸⁴⁷ *Northern Echo*, 29 April 1897, 3.

⁸⁴⁸ *Northern Echo*, 17 December 1884, 1; 18 December 1886, 1.

⁸⁴⁹ *Northern Echo*, 1 August 1933, 7.

⁸⁵⁰ *Northern Echo*, 2 February 1885, 1.

⁸⁵¹ *Northern Echo*, 18 December 1886, 1.

Britain, and the potential profit that could be made from them. In addition, it cannot be excluded that during his travels in Europe he had the chance to build a sort of commercial network that helped him in the sourcing of Japanese articles.

In 1889 Mossom established a new branch in 19 High Row, the main commercial street in Darlington, naming it Japanese Shop,⁸⁵² which ceased to be mentioned in newspapers and trade directories in 1894.⁸⁵³ The name “Japanese Shop,” however, was not an indication of the articles on sale within. When the Japanese Shop opened, instead of detailing the specific Japanese objects that might be found for sale, Mossom published advertisements in the local newspapers that instead allusively list “British and Oriental art pottery” (Figure 64). Even when he purchased a larger advertising space in a minor newspaper, the details provided with regard to the Japanese objects were quite generic in comparison with British wares. For instance, the advert lists “British and Oriental art pottery, including Abbotsford, Bretby, Burmantofts and Doulton Wares, Japanese, Chinese, Indian, and other Oriental Pottery.”⁸⁵⁴



Figure 64 - William Mossom, Japanese Shop, Darlington, *Northern Echo*, 1 February 1889, 1.

Mossom’s advertisements demonstrate that in late Victorian Britain choosing a Japan-related term was not exclusively a decisive reference to the wares of the East Asian country. As in the late nineteenth century the idea of Japan developed into a synonym of aesthetic excellence in the eyes of the Victorians, naming a business “Japanese Shop” identifies an attempt by the retailer to enhance also those objects manufactured in other countries which were displayed within the premises, such as a wide selection of British wares. Following Appadurai, it could

⁸⁵² *Northern Echo*, 1 February 1889, 1.

⁸⁵³ *Whellan's Directory of Durham 1894: Description of Every Place, Lists Residents with Trades* (Durham: Whellan, 1894), 487.

⁸⁵⁴ *Darlington and Stockton Times*, 28 December 1889, 1.

be argued that Mossom provided to himself and to his customers a space in which sent and received messages conveyed the value of artistic excellence associated with the stereotyped vision of “Old” Japan in all of the products found within his shop.

This commercial strategy assumes that the local community was familiar with such image of Japan. The proof that this condition was fulfilled arrived to Mossom after he witnessed the success of various Japan-themed events organised in Darlington at the end of the 1880s, such as the charity bazaar named *Mikado Festival and Feast of Lanterns* analysed in the previous chapter. As discussed by Sarah Roddy, Julie-Marie Strange, and Bertrand Taithe, commercial enterprises and voluntary organizations did not exist in separate worlds and it was not uncommon to find similarities between fundraising and retailing practices in Victorian times.⁸⁵⁵ Accordingly, it is no surprise that two years after the Mikado Festival, Mossom decided to name his new retail store “Japanese Shop.” In a similar manner to the charity bazaar, in which locally manufactured goods were displayed in stalls named after Japanese towns, the articles on sale in the Japanese Shop were mostly British in spite of the name of the business which manifested a clear link to Japan.

Another inspiration for Mossom might have been the Japanese imagery to which he and the wider Darlington community was exposed, for example, a local flower show organised in Darlington in 1887. To promote this event, the illustrator of the promotional poster depicted two East Asian labourers dressed in traditional Japanese clothes carrying a monumental vase planted with peonies (Figure 65). The group of frogs which are helping the two men are depicted with anthropomorphic attitudes and gestures, which represents a visual trope extremely common in Japan since the twelfth century⁸⁵⁶ and still prominent in the work of Japanese artists such as Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831-1889).⁸⁵⁷ In a similar manner to the posters of the Japanese Native Village in London (Figure 44) and the Japanese Village Fair in Gateshead (Figure 42), part of the illustration was probably inspired by an original Japanese source or sources, such as printed books designed by *ukiyo-e* masters.

⁸⁵⁵ Sarah Roddy et al., *The Charity Market and Humanitarianism in Britain, 1870–1912* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018).

⁸⁵⁶ The most famous example is the set of four handscrolls entitled *Chōjū-jinbutsu-giga* (Animal-person Caricatures) painted in the mid-twelfth century and now held into the Kyoto National Museum and Tokyo National Museum.

⁸⁵⁷ See Timothy Clark, *Demon of Painting: The Art of Kawanabe Kyōsai* (London: British Museum Press, 1993); Rosina Buckland et al., *A Japanese Menagerie: Animal Pictures by Kawanabe Kyōsai* (London: British Museum Press, 2006).



Figure 65 - *Darlington Horticultural Society, Flower Show, 27 August 1887.* PH2912. Darlington Centre for Local Studies, Darlington. Detail.

Taking into consideration these two examples, it is apparent that in Darlington these juxtapositions of Japanese visual and material culture with local events were particularly welcome, to the point of convincing Mossom to open a new shop with a Japan-related name. Rather than simply reinforcing Japanese “Otherness,” the coexistence of local and Japanese elements enhanced local manufacture and public events, demonstrating that even in a provincial town such as Darlington the idea of Japan was equated to cosmopolitan beauty and artistic taste worthy of being experienced in the everyday. Observing this phenomenon, Mossom probably presumed that investing in a new branch of this decorative company and naming it “Japanese Shop” would gain it the support of the Darlington community.

Conclusion

Drawing upon newspapers published in the North East of England advertising Japanese objects, this chapter has demonstrated the ubiquity of Japanese manufactured items in regional shops from the early 1860s, and not only in urban centres, but also in rural areas. Although that the majority of the 112 local retailers identified in this study advertised the sale of Japanese decorative objects only occasionally, they all contributed to spreading the same idealised vision of Japan that from the late 1870s became widely popular and accepted by a mainstream audience.

In order to preserve this fictional, pre-modern image, retailers avoided mentioning any reference to the exact source of the objects that they sold, even in towns such as Newcastle and Sunderland which were directly connected to Japanese companies and the Japanese government by strong economic relationships. Privileging a vision of “Old” Japan, retailers in the North East attempted to take advantage of the objectified and commodified vision of the Asian country, which reduced the experience of Japanese culture to the consumption of its artistic objects.

The Mikado Bazaar in Sunderland epitomised all of these aspects when it was established to exploit the instant success of the Gilbert and Sullivan operetta from which it derived its name, in a multifaceted shopping experience reliant on a feeling of escapism and based on the “consumerist vision of an exoticized East” theorised by Krista Lysack. On the one hand, this commodified representation of Japanese culture helped advance the popularity of Japanese goods among a wide audience in the North East and encouraged local people to create individualised cosmopolitan arrangements at home using Japanese decorative objects. On the other, it reinforced the dichotomy between “Old” and “New” Japan by favouring a fictional, pre-modern vision of a country that was embracing a swift and successful process of modernisation.

In the Japanese Shop in Darlington, instead, the stereotyped idea of “Old” Japan was mostly exploited to enhance a wide selection of objects manufactured in Japan, Britain and other countries that were displayed in the premises. Probably inspired by Japan-themed events organised in Darlington, such as the Mikado Festival in 1887, the owner of the shop took advantage of the already established popularity of Japanese themes among the members of the local community in order to associate non-Japanese articles with the aesthetic excellence commonly attributed to Japanese artistic traditions. In so doing, Japanese “Otherness” was partially defused, naturalising the idea of Japan as an everyday experience which involved also other artistic traditions such as British. This demonstrates that not only the idea of Japan was so popular among the Victorian consumers that even provincial retailers took advantage of it, but also further confirms that Japanese aesthetics became an inclusive and transcultural synonym of artistic excellence also in provincial towns such as Darlington.

Chapter V: Collecting and Consumption

Introduction

Traditionally, scholars consider collecting and consumption as two different activities. According to Russell Belk, collecting is defined as “the process of actively, selectively, and passionately acquiring and possessing things removed from ordinary use and perceived as part of a set of non-identical objects or experiences,”⁸⁵⁸ and it differs “from most other types of consumption in the concern for a set of objects, the passion invested in obtaining and maintaining these objects.”⁸⁵⁹ Among the reasons that might encourage such a collecting practice, Susan Pearce has listed numerous possible motivations: leisure, aesthetics, competition, risk, fantasy, a sense of community, prestige, domination, sensual gratification, sexual foreplay, desire to reframe objects, the pleasing rhythm of sameness and difference, ambition to achieve perfection, extending the self, reaffirming the body, producing gender identity, achieving immortality.⁸⁶⁰ While the practice of collecting and consuming Japanese visual and material culture is surely in line with most of the motivations listed by Pearce, the previous chapters of this thesis have already demonstrated that, to assess the manifold and nuanced understanding of Japan in the North East, more fluid models should be privileged. As explained by Mieke Bal, “the inevitability of the impulse to collect” emerges from “a cultural situation that is itself hybridic.”⁸⁶¹ Therefore, to provide a focused analysis of such an “impulse,” the consumption and collecting of Japanese objects is investigated with no strict categorisations. More specifically, by moving from the public to the private sphere, this chapter explores the ways in which some of the most common representations of Japan, and meanings linked to Japanese culture, were challenged, if not subverted. While this study has shown that in public the dichotomy between “New” and “Old” Japan was constantly reaffirmed and respectively associated with masculine and feminine connotations, in private these gendered boundaries, as well as the discourse regarding “Self/Other,” were partially revised in order to create a comfortable, cosmopolitan, and artistic domestic environment. Accordingly, the research questions addressed in this chapter are the following: *in which ways did the domestic*

⁸⁵⁸ Russell Belk, *Collecting in a Consumer Society* (London: Routledge, 1995), 67.

⁸⁵⁹ Russell Belk, “Collecting as Luxury Consumption: Effects on Individuals and Households,” *Journal of Economic Psychology* 16, no. 3 (1995): 479.

⁸⁶⁰ Susan Pearce, *Museums, Objects, and Collections* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), 47.

⁸⁶¹ Mieke Bal, “Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting,” *The Cultures of Collecting*, edited by John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 109-110.

environment function as a contact zone between the North East and Japan? And who did mediate those narratives?

To answer, this chapter first examines the role played by mediators such as local retailers and authors of domestic advice manuals, revealing for the first time the ways in which such cultural mobilisers oriented part of the British debate concerning Japanese decorative objects towards a morally acceptable consumption. The appreciation and consumption of Japanese decorative objects in the North East, however, was more stratified than that, and the following sections of this chapter analyse this cultural phenomenon from different perspectives. Taking inspiration from Clive Edwards's book *Turning Houses into Homes* (2005), Japanese objects within the domestic environment will be discussed in relation to Victorian taste and consumer culture, as signs of status and individual identity, and as vehicles of meaning.

Drawing upon auction sale catalogues, it is possible to identify the 1880s as the decade in which the popularity of Japanese objects in the North East reached its peak, in line with what was happening in the other British regions. Ambiguity, ambivalence and uncertainty in relation to modernity influenced middle-class consumption and the success of Japanese articles among members of that social class such as William Armstrong, Joseph Swan, or Carl Bolckow reflected this pattern. However, this chapter does not commit the mistake to associate the Japan mania exclusively to the middle class because local aristocrats and clergymen also acquired Japanese decorative objects, demonstrating the diverse degree of fascination which Japanese aesthetics had over different social groups in Victorian time.

The popularity of Japanese objects in the North East can be explained by the fact that Japanese articles carried further social meanings, such as morality, physical and emotional comfort, and cosmopolitanism, that were not originally intended by the Japanese artisans who produced these objects. Moreover, the ambiguous gender connotations, demonstrated by the presence of Japanese articles in both masculine and feminine spaces within the house, can be considered a precursive sign of the developments in the British domesticity which saw the consolidation of women's control over the house decoration in the inter-war period.

As this chapter unearths, the private, domestic environment represented the only contact zone in which a coexistence of "Old" and "New" Japan occurred without a clear separation, unlike what was earlier demonstrated to have taken place in the newspapers, public events, and retailing. As Japanese decorative objects became an important part of the regional cosmopolitan

interior, the resulting arrangement served as a site of contact between local communities and transcultural phenomena such as the fascination with Japan and cosmopolitan aspirations.

Mediators of Japanese decorative objects in the NE

Considering the consumption of Japanese material culture, it is worth pointing out the mediating role played by the local retailers and domestic advice literature. As theorised by Grace Lees-Maffei in her “Production – Consumption – Mediation Paradigm,” mediation should be considered a “third stream” that “brings together issues of production and consumption, illuminating not only the importance of mediating channels, [...] but also the role of designed goods as mediating devices.”⁸⁶² Lees-Maffei further specifies that the PCM paradigm should not be considered a linear model, but the three discourses co-exist and constantly overlap. Following this assumption, this chapter highlights the entangled discourses of mediation, consumption, and transculturalism.

In addition to the newspaper advertisements and public events discussed in previous chapters, the consumption of decorative objects manufactured in Japan was also promoted in domestic advice literature. As stated by Martha McClagherty, this literary genre comprised books and journal articles full of practical suggestions regarding home decorating that “sought to educate homeowners, who were quickly becoming consumers of the plethora of ready-made items rather than patrons of local community cabinetmakers and upholster.”⁸⁶³ McClagherty identifies *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture* (1868) by Charles Locke Eastlake (1836-1906)⁸⁶⁴ as the premiere example of such literature, which developed into a transatlantic, popular phenomenon.⁸⁶⁵ Borrowing concepts from the Gothic Revivalists and design reformers such as Augustus Pugin (1812-1852), Owen Jones (1809-1874), and Bruce Talbert (1838-1881), Eastlake made accessible to a popular audience the equation of beautiful art with useful art, in which good taste, rather than an ostentatious display of wealth, epitomised an educated knowledge of art principles.⁸⁶⁶ In the period between 1868 and 1893, McClagherty counts at

⁸⁶² Grace Lees-Maffei, “The Production–Consumption–Mediation Paradigm,” *Journal of Design History* 22, no. 4 (2009): 354.

⁸⁶³ Martha McClagherty, “Household Art: Creating the Artistic Home, 1868-1893,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 18, no. 1 (1983): 1.

⁸⁶⁴ Charles Locke Eastlake served as secretary of the Royal Institute of British architects.

⁸⁶⁵ McClagherty, “Household Art,” 2-4.

⁸⁶⁶ The link between Eastlake and Pugin, Jones, Talbert (1838-1881) is discussed in Charlotte Gere, *The House Beautiful: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetic Interior* (London: Geoffrey Museum, 2000), 78.

least 23 books and innumerable journal articles, among which a prominent role was played by the series of advice manuals called *Art at Home*, published by Macmillan from 1876 and edited by the Reverend William J. Loftie.⁸⁶⁷ As discussed by Charlotte Gere, before the *Art at Home* series, most domestic advice books were only accessible to prosperous professional households because of their high price.⁸⁶⁸ Costing only two shillings and six pence, the series of manuals edited by Loftie were able to reach a larger audience. Accordingly, Emma Ferry has suggested that the series “should be interpreted as a complex collection of discourses” concerning new construction of class and revised gender roles.⁸⁶⁹

Over the last two decades, scholars have discussed the strengths and weaknesses of Victorian advice manuals as primary sources in academic studies.⁸⁷⁰ As suggested by Emma Ferry, “domestic design advice books [...] need to be understood both as historical documents that engage with contemporary notions of design and taste, and as a genre of Victorian narrative.”⁸⁷¹ With regard to its main readership, Deborah Cohen posits that advice manuals were mainly addressed to an “enlightened middle class” male audience because husbands had the last word on house decoration, especially on economic matters such as whether or not to purchase a piece of furniture or an expensive decorative fitting.⁸⁷² Ferry agrees with Cohen with regard to the male readership, but she also adds that female authors such as Rhoda and Agnes Garrett, or Martha Jane Loftie started to subvert this male-dominated discourse in their domestic advice manuals published in the second half of the 1870s.⁸⁷³ Moreover, Ferry identifies more precisely the lower-middle class as the main target of such literature, which “promoted an upper-middle class view of how lower-middle class aspirants should decorate, furnish, and behave in their

⁸⁶⁷ McClaugherty, “Household Art,” 1.

⁸⁶⁸ For example, *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture* was priced 18 shilling. Gere, *The House Beautiful*, 79.

⁸⁶⁹ Emma Ferry, “... information for the ignorant and aid for the advancing’ Macmillan’s ‘Art at Home’ Series, 1876-83,” *Design and Modern Magazine*, edited by Jeremy Aynsley and Kate Forde (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 135.

⁸⁷⁰ Among the many, see: McClaugherty, “Household Art.”; Grace Lees-Maffei, ed. *Special Issue: Domestic Design Advice* 16. no. 1 (2003); Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: the British and their Possessions* (London, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Judith Neiswander, *The Cosmopolitan Interior: Liberalism and the British Home 1870-1914* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2008).

⁸⁷¹ Emma Ferry, “‘Decorators May be Compared to Doctors’: An Analysis of Rhoda and Agnes Garrett’s Suggestion for House Decoration in Painting, Woodwork and Furniture (1876),” *Journal of Design History* 16, no. 1 (2003): 17.

⁸⁷² Cohen, *Household Gods*, 90.

⁸⁷³ Ferry, “‘Decorators May be Compared to Doctors,’” 30; Emma Ferry, “‘Any Lady Can Do This Without Much Trouble...’: Class and Gender in The Dining Room (1878),” *Interiors* 5, no. 2 (2014): 157.

homes.”⁸⁷⁴ In contrast, Judith Neiswander proposes that until 1887, when Jane Panton explicitly wrote for lower-middle class readers, the main audience was the upper-middle class and only from the early twentieth century were men excluded from decoration of the home debates.⁸⁷⁵

With regard to articles manufactured in Japan, the authors of domestic advice literature considered these objects as the best value for money, and for this reason, appropriate to any family that could not spend large sums of money on decorating their homes. For example, in 1876 H. J. Cooper suggests arranging “side panels [...] with decorative embroidery, painting, or any of the multifarious handiwork of China and Japan, which can be procured so cheaply.”⁸⁷⁶

The same year, the Reverend W. J. Loftie laments that:

It is some times [sic] quite absurd to see a plate or a bowl of Oriental ware put up and sold for a few shillings, while a similar piece, imitated from it and not nearly so good, but bearing a Worcester mark, fetches as many pounds.⁸⁷⁷

Later in his book, Loftie praises Japanese objects more explicitly with regard to their price: “the brilliant Japanese Cloisonné enamels are much cheaper, and have a very charming effect.”⁸⁷⁸

For the reverend, choosing Chinese and Japanese wares could be viewed as an investment because a cheap vase with a not yet deciphered mark could prove to be a rare and valuable piece in the future.⁸⁷⁹ In 1878, Lucy Orrinsmith argues a similar point when she alerts her readers that the cheap Japanese fans that were on the market a few years before will probably increase in value in the future as the next ones to arrive will be “distorted by acquired fashions and tastes.”⁸⁸⁰ Even in the following decades, Japanese decorative articles were generally considered the most convenient compromise between high taste and low funds as confirmed in

⁸⁷⁴ Emma Ferry, “... information for the ignorant and aid for the advancing’ Macmillan’s ‘Art at Home’ Series, 1876-83,” *Design and Modern Magazine*, edited by Jeremy Aynsley and Kate Forde (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 151.

⁸⁷⁵ Jane Panton, *From Kitchen to Garret: Hints for Young Householders* (London: Ward & Downey, 1887); Neiswander, *The Cosmopolitan Interior*, 21-22.

⁸⁷⁶ H. J. Cooper, *The Art of Furnishing: on Rational and Aesthetic Principles* (London: Henry S. King, 1876), 82.

⁸⁷⁷ William John Loftie, *A Plea for Art in the House* (London: Macmillan, 1876), 81.

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.

⁸⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 81.

⁸⁸⁰ Lucy Orrinsmith (1839-1910) was a painter, engraver, and embroider that follow the Art and Craft Movement. Lucy Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room: its Decorations and Furniture* (London: Macmillan, 1877) 140. A similar point was made by Edward W. Godwin in 1876: “Take for example the common paper fan of today and compare it with some imported here ten or even eight years ago. Those are for the most part lovely in delicate colour and exquisite in drawing, but most of today’s fans are impregnated with the crudeness of the European’s sense of colour, and are immeasurably beneath the older examples.” Quoted in Alison Adburgham, *Liberty’s. A Biography of a Shop* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1975), 22. Considering that in *The Drawing Room* there are (uncredited) designs by Godwin, it is highly possible that Orrinsmith was aware of the architect-designer’s opinion. See, Ferry, “Macmillan’s ‘Art at Home’ Series,” 145-146.

Homes of Taste by Jane Panton, who affirms through the discussion of the arrangement of a corridor:

the decorator's art should be turned on to the space above the arras, which should be covered as much as possible with the inexpensive open Japanese fans and screens, and here and there a bracket surrounded by and made more important by a trophy of fans, and supporting one of the wonderful Imari vases one buys for a few pence.⁸⁸¹

The idea that Japanese articles were relatively cheaper despite their excellent decorative qualities was almost unanimous, and only at the beginning of the twentieth century, a negative comment on that very specific aspect appeared. For example, the architect John Elder-Duncan wrote in 1907:

Art muslin, enamelled nicknacks, and Japanese fans are very unsatisfying after their first youth; and, when the cost of renewals is taken into consideration, are eventually found to be expensive. First cost may be low, but the maintenance charges are high.⁸⁸²

As demonstrated in the previous chapter's discussion of retailers, the authors of domestic advice manuals similarly promoted an eclectic approach to consumption and decorative arrangement in which Japanese and other exotic articles should be placed close to British and European ones in order to make the room look more "artistic." For example, Charles Eastlake suggested in the late 1860s:

An Indian ginger-jar, a Flemish beer-jug, a Japanese fan, may each become in turn a valuable lesson in decorative form and colour. [...] I would suggest to those who possess such things that they should associate and group them together as much as possible.⁸⁸³

The same idea was shared by William Loftie, who states in his book published in 1876:

Etruscan or Greek vases, Moorish brown and black ware, Egyptian stone bottles, and modern Norman or German grés [...] are all things beautiful in themselves. They will have an excellent effect if judiciously contrasted with Japanese jars and bowls [...].⁸⁸⁴

Likewise, Lucy Orrinsmith affirms that "Japanese [fan] arrangements as seem always to tone well with old English furniture,"⁸⁸⁵ and praises the quaint beauty of a "skilfully treated and cosy

⁸⁸¹ Jane Panton, *Homes of taste: Economical Hints* (London: Low et al., 1890), 19.

⁸⁸² John H. Elder-Duncan. *The House Beautiful and Useful: Being Practical Suggestions on Furnishing and Decoration* (London: Cassell, 1907), 30.

⁸⁸³ Charles Locke Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste in Furniture, Upholstery and other Details*, (London: Longmags, Green & Co., 1868), 121.

⁸⁸⁴ Loftie, *A Plea for Art in the House*, 83.

⁸⁸⁵ Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room*, 141.

little corner” in which a Stuart style chair, a little Chinese table, and a Japanese hanging scroll were arranged close to each other (Figure 66).⁸⁸⁶

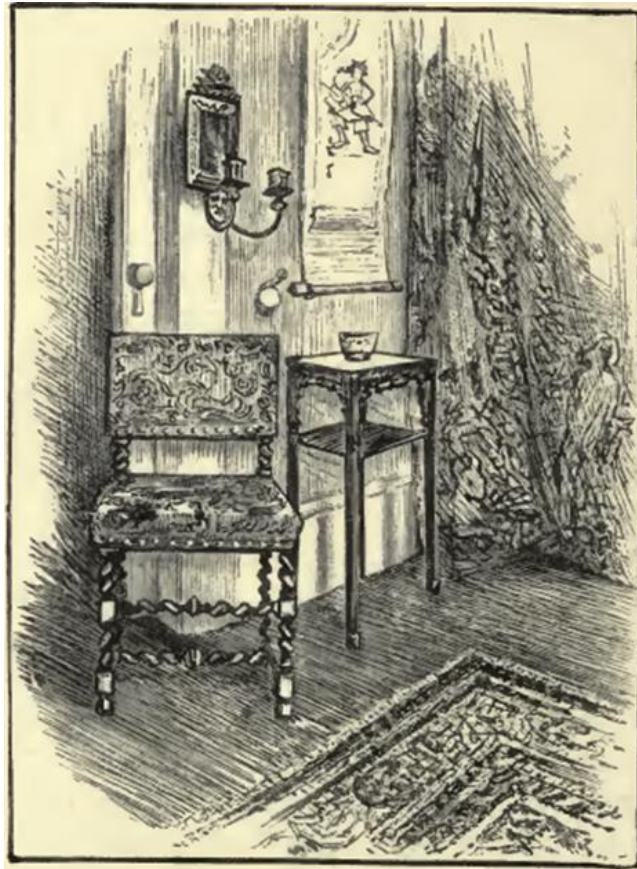


Figure 66 – Francis Lathrop (1849-1909). In Lucy Orrinsmith, *The Drawing-Room: its Decorations and Furniture* (London: Macmillan, 1877), 52.

Mary Haweis proposed a structured set of criteria for eclectic displays that involved Japanese manufactured articles. “Oriental” decorative objects were allowed in British or European interiors only if the two cultures were in contact when the respective furniture or fittings produced. As Haweis explains:

A very Japanese room should not be marred by early English work, such as would be unlikely to reach Japan. On the other hand, a Georgian room may contain Jacobean furniture ; a Jacobean room may take hints from old Japan or Egypt, for objects of contemporary or earlier date may be assumed to have a possible right in the room, which those of a later date cannot have by any stretch of imagination.⁸⁸⁷

⁸⁸⁶ This juxtaposition was not conceived by Orrinsmith. In this passage, she was interpreting an illustration originally published in the series of articles written by Clarence Cook in *Scribner’s Monthly* and published between 1875 and 1877. As disclosed by Emma Ferry, most of the illustrations in Orrinsmith’s books, as well as the ones in Lady Barker’s *The Bedroom and the Boudoir* (1878) and Mrs Loftie’s *The Dining Room* (1877), were acquired from Scribner by Macmillan, the publisher of the *Art at Home* series, in 1877. Ferry, “Macmillan’s ‘Art at Home’ Series,” 142-146.

⁸⁸⁷ Mary Eliza Haweis, *The Art of Decoration* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1881), 28.

This rigorous methodology would have been difficult to apply due to the lack of historical knowledge about the relationship between Japan and the other countries, neglecting to take into consideration the transcultural nature of Meiji art for export. However, it is worth pointing out the effort by Haweis to find the proper way to incorporate Japanese decorative objects even in traditional British environments, corroborating that in addition to retailers, the precepts of cosmopolitan liberalism were promoted also by authors of decorative advice manuals.

Advice literature had also a prominent role in mediating and promoting a conscious consumption in line with the rigid Victorian code of conduct. As suggested by Deborah Cohen, the Victorian taste concerning domestic interior decoration was highly influenced by the concept of morality which was extended in every aspect of public and private life, including selecting and purchasing decorative objects to display at home.⁸⁸⁸ In 1849, the design reformer Henry Cole (1808-1882) emphasised the link between taste and morality, affirming:

I think to act upon the principle of ‘every one to his taste,’ would be as mischievous as ‘every one to his morals’; and I think there are principles in taste which all eminent artists are agreed upon in all parts of the world.⁸⁸⁹

Among these principles, Cole advised against examples of what Suga Yasuko has identified as “three-dimensional naturalistic patterns on two-dimensional surfaces.”⁸⁹⁰ In other words, when motifs are rendered in an overly realistic manner and not properly stylised. To fight what he considered “bad taste” – and consequently “immoral” design –, Cole shed light on the active role of consumers, arguing that “if the public are unable to appreciate excellence, surely we cannot call on the manufacturer to produce it at a sacrifice.”⁸⁹¹ While in 1864 a Victorian critic such as John Ruskin made such principles central to the high-end art debate, reinforcing that, “good taste is essentially a moral quality [...] Taste is not only a part and index of morality;— it is the only morality;”⁸⁹² advice literature was instrumental to diffuse Cole’s arguments among the rest of British society in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁸⁹³

⁸⁸⁸ Cohen, *Household Gods*, 6.

⁸⁸⁹ Quoted in Alan S. Cole, *Fifty Years of Public Work of Sir Henry Cole, K.C.B. Accounted for in His Deeds, Speeches, and Writings*, Vol. I (London: George Bell and Sons, 1884), 286.

⁸⁹⁰ Yasuko Suga, “Designing the Morality of Consumption: ‘Chamber of Horrors’ at the Museum of Ornamental Art, 1852-1853,” *Design Issue* 20, no. 4 (2004): 50.

⁸⁹¹ *Journal of Design and Manufactures* 2, no. 7 (1849): 1.

⁸⁹² John Ruskin, *The Crown of Wild Olive* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1866), 82.

⁸⁹³ Suga mentions Charles Eastlake’s *Hints on Household Taste* (London, 1868) and Christopher Dresser’s *Principle of Decorative Design* (1873) as the prominent publications which disseminated “the argument regarding good and bad, or true and false, design” as well as the moral quality of a conscious consumption. Yasuko Suga, “Designing the Morality of Consumption: ‘Chamber of Horrors’ at the Museum of Ornamental Art, 1852-1853,” *Design Issue* 20, no. 4 (2004): 54.

Within domestic advice manuals, also the understanding and promotion of Japanese decorative objects was interpreted through Victorian morality. As Kikuchi Yuko and Watanabe Toshio have shown, beyond a positive reception of the formal innovations it introduced to the West, Japanese art was initially critiqued for lacking of morality and idealism by intellectuals such as William Michael Rossetti and James Jackson Jarves.⁸⁹⁴ By the late 1870s, however, authors of domestic advice manuals did not hesitate to suggest Japanese decorative objects to their readers, underlining how the articles manufactured in Japan represented an excellent choice also under moral criteria. Generally, Japanese decorative art was able to pass this unreserved judgement because Japanese artisans were perceived as able to capture and stylise the true essence of the natural world thanks to their superior skill as well as their work ethic.

Echoing the principle highlighted by Cole, the Japanese ability to produce an essential replica of the natural world by encapsulating its characteristic elements and eliminating irrelevant details was highly praised by the authors of advice literature. William Loftie, who edited the *Art at Home* series, provides an effective definition of this sort of “essential naturalism” in his *A Plea for Art in the House* (1876):

Mankind has not been able till within the last few centuries to see fully how beautiful nature is, and how the love of nature is like the sixth sense. Virgil and the classical poets only introduce landscape incidentally. The Christian poets, with King David himself to lead them, alone describe natural loveliness properly - that is, religiously.⁸⁹⁵

Even if Loftie and the other authors never talked about Japanese objects in such religious terms, the way in which Japanese art and design was described in contemporary advice manuals encoded an implicit parallel between Christian values and the Japanese artists’ attitude towards and ability in depicting the natural world. As suggested by Jane Converse Brown with regard to the American context:

Many writers described the sincerity and high quality of Japanese work. [...] Sincerity was thought to be an important attribute of good craftsmanship; it is a Christian virtue, an aspect of fundamental honesty. Traditional hand-crafted works were described ‘sincere’ because of their maker’s and the unpretentious use of raw materials.⁸⁹⁶

⁸⁹⁴ Yuko Kikuchi and Toshio Watanabe, “British Discovery of Japanese Art,” *The History of Anglo-Japanese Relations, 1600-2000, Vol. V* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 146-170.

⁸⁹⁵ Loftie, *A Plea for Art in the House*, 98.

⁸⁹⁶ Jane Converse Brown, “‘Fine Art and Fine People’ Japanese Taste in American Home, 1876-1916,” *Making the American Home: Middle-class Women & Domestic Material Culture, 1840-1940*, edited by Marilyn Ferris Motz and Pat Browne (Bowling Green: Popular Press, 1988), 123-124, 136.

This search for compatibility should be read as the attempt to project British and Western values onto Japanese manufactured goods in order to naturalise their presence in the domestic environment.

In Victorian domestic advice literature, each author stressed a different connotation of this “sincerity” attributed to Japanese craftsmanship. The wife of Reverend Loftie, Martha, in her discussion of Japanese floral arrangement in *The Dining-room* (1878), asserts that “the highest art with [the Japanese] aims at preserving the appearance of natural growth.”⁸⁹⁷ Robert William Edis (1839-1927), an architect linked to the Aesthetic Movement, sentimentally celebrated the Japanese artists’ “love for, and an intimate knowledge of, all that is beautiful in Nature [...]”⁸⁹⁸ Moncure Daniel Conway (1832-1907), on the contrary, underlined the scientific “courage” in possession of the Japanese, that:

when they aim at nature, have the rare courage to paint nature as it is; and, as a result, the tortuous necks of their birds tell the story of their reptilian relationship as clearly as it has been told by Professor Huxley.⁸⁹⁹

Conway was an American Unitarian minister that moved to London and became a prominent figure of the South Place Religious Society, a freethought congregation. Being a radical thinker, the position of Conway should not be considered particularly prevalent among other intellectuals and the general public. However, it reflects how diverse perceptions of the skill and sincerity with which the Japanese depicted the natural world were.

Some authors identified in the Japanese artisans’ “sincerity” also the reason of their technical superiority over their British colleagues. This concept was popularised by H. J. Cooper, a professional decorator, who wrote *The Art of Furnishing: on Rational and Aesthetic Principles* in 1876. Cooper firstly praised the ability of Japanese (and Indian) embroiderers to portray “the exact nature of the thing [...], yet with a single line or two”;⁹⁰⁰ concluding that they have “just the same power over the needle and silks or wools as an artist has over his pencil and palette.”⁹⁰¹ With no intention to subvert the artistic hierarchy between fine and decorative arts, Cooper also

⁸⁹⁷ Martha Loftie, *The Dining-room*, 119.

⁸⁹⁸ Robert William Edis, *Decoration & Furniture of Town Houses* (London: C. Kegan Paul, 1881) 163.

⁸⁹⁹ Moncure Daniel Conway, *Travels in South Kensington with Notes on Decorative art and Architecture in England* (London: Trubner & Co., 1882), 184. Thomas Henry Huxley (1825-1895) was an English biologist who supported Charles Darwin’s evolutionary theory delivering public lectures and participating at public debates. For an introduction, see, John Vernon Jensen, *Thomas Henry Huxley: Communicating for Science* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1991).

⁹⁰⁰ Cooper, *The Art of Furnishing*, 110-111.

⁹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 111.

implies that British decorators should mark the skill of Asian artisans as exemplars in their complete dedication towards what British considered “minor” arts. Moreover, in the following pages, the author critiques British decorators who often misinterpret the advice “to go to nature as the infallible guide in all questions pertaining to art, whether pictorial or decorative.”⁹⁰² As Cooper suggests:

we must go to nature, not as mere copyists, but as reasoning intelligent beings, with the endeavour to understand the laws by which is governed the principles on which she invariably works.⁹⁰³

This approach to nature, as a rational being rather than a copyist, is what Cooper and other authors of advice literature generally associated with Japanese artisans. In the early 1880s, Lucy Crane (1842-1882) went even further, affirming that the secret of Japanese excellence in decorating should be sought in the love that Japanese artists put in their work. After citing Edward Reed,⁹⁰⁴ who celebrated the unique work ethic of Japanese artisans and “the love with which they perform their painstaking labour,”⁹⁰⁵ Crane concludes:

This is the great of excellence in decoration, in everything that pertains to art, that the artist workman should take delight at work. About how many of the common decorations of a room can this be said?⁹⁰⁶

In the eyes of most advice literature authors, the technical excellence in Japanese objects was made possible by the ethical and moral qualities of the Japanese artisans who manufactured them. As discussed by Christopher Bush, at the end of the nineteenth century, British people commonly understood Japan, its people and culture through its art objects.⁹⁰⁷ Therefore, it is no surprise that the appreciation of the artefacts manufactured in Japan was inextricably linked to the respect given to Japanese artisans, even if their image was deeply idealised.

The ways in which Japanese artisans were admired for their sincerity and skill reflects a more complex transcultural relationship beyond the simple admiration for the exotic. As theorised by David Cannadine, during the colonial era, many elite westerners chose to emphasize their

⁹⁰² Ibid., 112.

⁹⁰³ Ibid., 112.

⁹⁰⁴ Eduard Reed (1830-1906) was a naval architect who, after visiting Japan, wrote *Japan: its History, Traditions, and Religions* (1880). Reed’s popularity even in the North East is testified by the fact that he and his book were mentioned multiple time in North Eastern newspapers: *Durham County Advertiser*, 30 May 1879, 6; *Newcastle Courant*, 13 June 1879, 2; *Newcastle Courant*, 2 March 1883, 2. See also, Sir Hugh Cortazzi “Sir Edward Reed (1830-1906): Naval Architect”, *Britain and Japan: Biographical Portraits*, Vol. VII, edited by Sir Hugh Cortazzi (Folkestone: Global Oriental, 2010), 44-57.

⁹⁰⁵ Lucy Crane, *Art and the Formation of Taste* (London: Macmillan, 1882), 58.

⁹⁰⁶ Ibid., 59.

⁹⁰⁷ Christopher Bush, “The Ethnicity of Things in America's Lacquered Age,” *Representations* 99, no. 1 (2007): 78-98.

commonality with, rather than their superiority to, the elites of non-western countries, and that transcultural solidarity between ethnic groups often trumped racial prejudice.⁹⁰⁸ Gregory Clancy uses this approach in his work on international exhibitions, in a discussion of the ways in which observers viewed the craftsmen who constructed Japanese exhibits. He describes how middle-class Victorians praised Japanese carpenters for their high levels of craftsmanship and single-minded work ethic, while disparaging their unionized, politicized British counterparts.⁹⁰⁹ Accordingly, by expressing their genuine sympathy for the idealised image of Japanese artisans, authors of domestic advice manuals attempted to identify their suggested décor and consumables with the refinement thought typical of the Japanese artistic tradition, and in doing so distinguish them from the examples of “bad taste” that tarnished the judgement of uneducated Victorian decorators and consumers. In so doing, the predominant dualism between “Self” and “Other” was temporarily questioned in favour of a more fluid understanding of what each author considered “good taste” through Victorian moral criteria. As a result, the racial and national themes encoded in this discourse constructed a new narrative that simultaneously reveals late-Victorian anxieties at the moral quality of British design and the desire to welcome “virtuous” Japanese manufacture to British domesticity.

Even if most of the domestic advice manuals were published in London, or written by London-based intellectuals, most of the books discussed in this chapter were (and are still now) in the collection of the Literary & Philosophical Society library, an institution which was the centre of Newcastle’s cultural life in the Victorian period, demonstrated their availability in the North East of England.⁹¹⁰ Therefore, it is possible to assume that at least the people living in the major centres of the North East of England were informed about the latest trends and debates concerning the home decoration in a similar manner to their counterparts in other British regions.

While domestic advice literature exemplified ideas concerning taste in relation to home decorating at the national level, professional decorators in the North East represented the local

⁹⁰⁸ David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

⁹⁰⁹ Greg Clancey, *Earthquake Nation: The Cultural Politics of Japanese Seismicity, 1868-1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 45-49.

⁹¹⁰ Among the books mentioned in this chapter: Eastlake, *Hints on Household Taste*; Martha Loftie, *The Dining-room*; Barker, *The Bedroom and the Boudoir*; Edis, *Decoration & Furniture of Town Houses*; Joseph Crouch and Edmund Butler, *The Apartments of the House: their Arrangement, Furnishing and Decoration* (London: At the Sign of the Unicorn, 1900).

response to this cultural phenomenon. According to Clive Edwards, retailers, and especially upholsterers, had played a prominent role in advising wealthy clients in interior decoration since the early seventeenth century.⁹¹¹ More than simply selecting the textile furnishings of rooms, upholsterers were often in charge of running complex enterprises, coordinating the supply from other craftsmen such as silk mercers, embroiderers, and cabinet-makers, in order to offer a full interior decoration service to their clientele. As this network of sub-contractors was supervised by a single professional figure, it was easier for the upholsterer to introduce new styles and influence public taste. As Edwards has shown, it was not rare for middle-class clients to pass on the full responsibility of furnishing their home directly to upholsters or other retailers, demonstrating that they were also considered professionals worthy of trust.⁹¹² Kathrine Grier also considers upholstery the perfect symbol of decorative arts in addressing the tension between “culture, the desire of cultivation and cosmopolitanism, and comfort, the desire of middle-class domesticity.”⁹¹³

It seems likely that some of the retailers in the North East discussed in the previous chapter offered advice in house furnishing, which possibly extended to the inclusion of Japanese objects in the interior. A retailer deeply involved in the commerce of Japanese decorative articles such as Alexander Corder, for example, proudly claimed that his firm was the most distinguished in Sunderland to help to realise the dream of having a “house beautiful”;⁹¹⁴ while William Mossom, a professional decorator, was well equipped to give advice on decorative matters to the clients that entered his “Japanese Shop” in Darlington. This is further demonstrated by the example of John Coates, an upholsterer that operated in Sunderland and Newcastle in the last quarter of the century. In November 1886, instead of a standard advert, Coates announced the temporary opening of his family house to the public in order to show his skill and knowledge in arranging different kinds of rooms. The article illustrates and describes the house interiors and gives also the price of some of the objects on view. The author of the article includes a description of a “Japanese room” in which:

⁹¹¹ Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes*, 29, 104-105.

⁹¹² *Ibid.*, 106-107.

⁹¹³ Katherine Grier, *Culture & Comfort: Parlor Making and Middle-Class Identity, 1850-1930* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Book, 1997), 17.

⁹¹⁴ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 14 December 1892, 2.

a marvellous and interesting collection of rare and quaint and novel and curious specimens of art are displayed by the light of numbers of Chinese lanterns. We cannot pretend to give a description of the contents of this room, which is papered and decorated in true Japanese style.⁹¹⁵

Unfortunately, the article does not define what a “true Japanese style” is, but lists some of the objects displayed: Japanese and Chinese small figures, Dresden plates, Salopian pottery,⁹¹⁶ and unspecified cabinets, fans and rugs.⁹¹⁷ Like Corder and Mossom, Coates displayed Japanese decorative objects in an eclectic manner, suggesting a true cosmopolitan environment to his audience in the North East of England. Coates’s Japanese room promoted his business and signalled his expertise. As Gillian Brown explains, model rooms in shops and department stores ultimately served to establish a link between commerce and the home through “the realisation and reinforcement of personal life in the acquisition of things believed to be necessary for self-sufficiency.”⁹¹⁸ In opening his home and sacrificing his privacy, Coates exemplified this concept, not only providing an example of eclectic display which anyone could replicate at their home by buying both Japanese and the other decorative objects from Coates’s shop, but also reinforcing the connection between commerce and domesticity discussed by Brown.

Japanese Objects and Victorian Consumer Culture in the North East of England

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, in the North East of England (and probably also in the other British regions) commodities such as textiles and other decorative objects started to be advertised from the early 1860s, becoming popular and affordable to a wider segment of the population. From the 1870s, this widespread phenomenon further developed to be considered a full-blown Japan mania, reaching its peak in the 1880s, as testified by increasing number of shops that have been identified, which became more specialised in Japanese decorative objects.

Unsurprisingly, the same tendency is confirmed taking into consideration other criteria with respect to the regional consumer culture. After analysing the auction sales catalogues published in newspapers in the North East between 1860 and 1910, in which Japanese objects were listed,

⁹¹⁵ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 27 November 1886, 3.

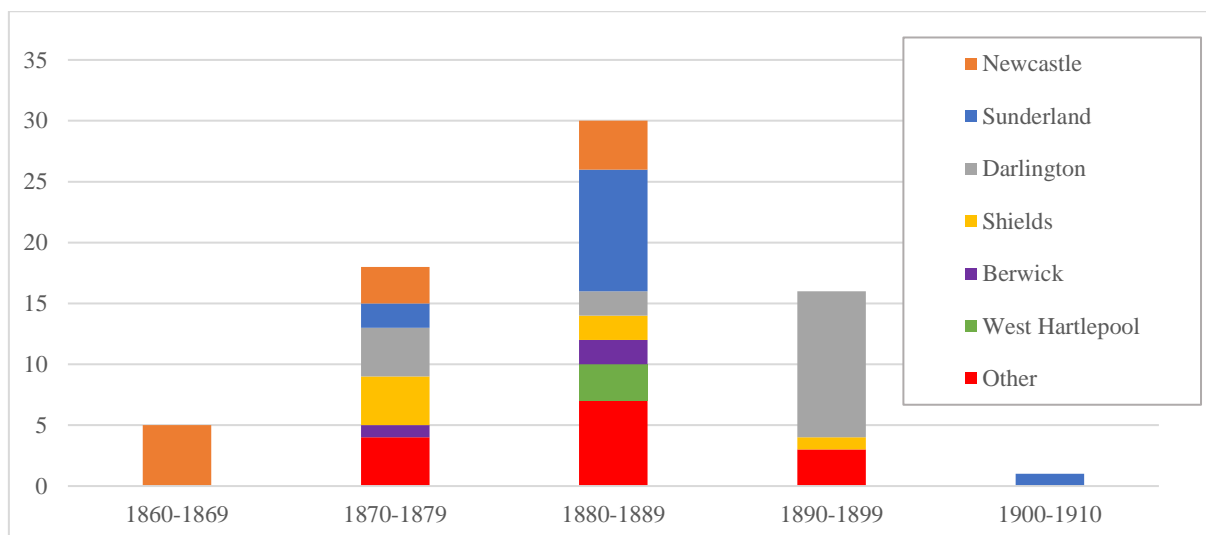
⁹¹⁶ British manufacture located in Benthall, Shropshire.

⁹¹⁷ It is no surprise all these articles were also on sale at the Coates’s shop, as testified by an advert published in 1884. *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 15 December 1884, 3.

⁹¹⁸ Gillian Brown, *Domestic Individualism: Imagining Self in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 182.

it is evident that a dramatic increase occurred in the 1870s as well as the peak reached in the 1880s (Graph 10). Moreover, seven different places are listed as “Other” in the graph for the 1880s, comprising small industrial villages such as East Boldon⁹¹⁹ or Newburn,⁹²⁰ as well as historical and market towns such as Belford⁹²¹ or Guisborough,⁹²² showing great geographical diversification in the distribution of Japanese decorative art.

Graph 10 - Auction Sales Catalogues with Japanese Objects Advertised in Newspapers Published in the North East between, 1860-1910.



Source: British Newspaper Archive.

To better understand the nature of the consumption of Japanese goods in the North East of England, the conceptual framework developed by Clive Edwards provides the best help. According to Edwards, the components of the Victorian taste can be reduced to four essential elements: *elitist*, *arriviste*, *reformist*, and *mass consumption*.⁹²³ As the scholar defines, the *elitist* component represents the intention by the consumers to retain the acquired status purchasing goods solely associated with, and accessible to, their social rank. The *arriviste*, instead, reflects the aim of distancing from the popular culture but keeping the same paradigms; in other words, the *arriviste* consumer desires to be the first to embrace a new trend but also the first to abandon it when it becomes affordable to everyone. The *reformist* component is linked to the thought that goods possess inner moral and didactic elements which can “re-socialize people in a

⁹¹⁹ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 10 September 1884, 2.

⁹²⁰ *Newcastle Courant*, 11 March 1881, 4.

⁹²¹ *Newcastle Journal*, 9 May 1885, 2.

⁹²² *Northern Echo*, 2 July 1880, 2.

⁹²³ Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes*, 168-169.

democratic way, as opposed to the self-centred way of the elites.”⁹²⁴ Lastly, the *mass consumption* represents those people who, anxious to be part of a united and respectable group, diligently follow the most popular trends in opposition to the bohemian fragmentation and individualism.

Taking into consideration the consumption of Japanese decorative objects in the North East of England, the initial *elitist* element left space to the *arriviste* and *reformist* in the second half of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. While prior to the 1860s, acquiring or collecting Japanese articles must be exclusively considered an *elitist* luxury, right after the ratification of the commercial treaty between Japan and Great Britain dated 1859, Japanese articles became easier to find even in the shops located in rural areas, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. In response to this, *elitist* consumption of articles manufactured in Japan developed into a more affordable trend which *arriviste* consumers likely perceived as an attractive novelty. As also the promotion of Japanese objects in both public loan exhibitions and generic charity bazaars organised in the North East have revealed, this initial interest became a relevant phenomenon from the late 1860s, evolving into a widespread Japan mania only in the following decade. While the enthusiasm stirred by everything Japanese reached a widespread popularity from the 1880s, it never developed into what Edwards has defined as *mass consumption*, simply because purchasing, collecting, or displaying Japanese objects remained a way to express one’s individuality in line with the sentiment of cosmopolitan liberalism advocated by local retailers and authors of advice manuals. As discussed in this chapter, the latter were also instrumental in promoting Japanese objects among *reformist* consumers, as the moral qualities attributed to the Japanese articles made them examples of good taste and therefore, acceptable and desirable objects for interior decoration.

In order to understand this diverse and multifaceted appreciation of the Japanese decorative objects by Victorian people, Grace Lavery offers a useful insight. Lavery borrows the concept of “subjective universal” judgment to explain the way in which the British looked at Japanese art and design.⁹²⁵ Theorised by Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790), the subjective universal judgment is a melancholic condition that occurs when (after

⁹²⁴ Ibid., 168.

⁹²⁵ Lavery, *Quaint, Exquisite*.

acknowledging the subjectivity of any aesthetic judgment) an individual presumes that everyone should agree about a beautiful or sublime object, although, he knows that many will not. In other words when “[Common sense] does not say that everyone will concur with our judgment but that everyone should.”⁹²⁶ Having said that, Lavery suggests that the inherent defectiveness of the subjective universal judgement is crucial to understand the Victorian popularity of Japanese things, in which the “felt inadequacy of [...] knowledge [...] is at the root of the idea of Japan.”⁹²⁷ The scholar further states:

The reality effect enacted by the Orientalist [writers] takes the rhetorical form of *praeteritio*: “I don’t really know anything about Japan but --.” The Orientalist argument worlds itself by insisting on the otherworldliness of its objects.⁹²⁸

This sort of “common ignorance” characterised by the uncertainty of knowledge is called by Lavery “queer realism” and “operates as the precise antipode of the ‘epistemology of the closet’”. Whereas the late nineteenth century [...] homosexuality was everywhere known but nowhere spoken; the queerness of Japan was everywhere spoken, but nowhere known.”⁹²⁹

It is in this accepted ambiguity that the consumption of Japanese decorative objects became part of what Pierre Bourdieu has called “cultural capital,” in its objectified form as a commodity and in its physical embodiment as taste.⁹³⁰ The success of Japanese decorative objects among a wide variety of social groups belonging to upper and middle classes testifies that in Victorian times Japanese articles were also read as a sign that demonstrated the acquisition of some of the cultural capital mentioned by Bourdieu: more specifically, the sign of possessing an eclectic and cosmopolitan taste at home.

Such potential social recognition was particularly attractive for middle-class people who sought a medium through which to express their individuality and artistic taste. For example, the most extensive collection of Japanese art in the North East was formed by Albert Howard

⁹²⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, translated by Paul Guyer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) 22.

⁹²⁷ Lavery, *Quaint, Exquisite*, x.

⁹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 37. Lavery is referencing Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990).

⁹³⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by John Richardson (Westport: Greenwood, 1986), 243-248.

Higginbottom who had moved in Newcastle from Derbyshire in 1876 as a brewer's agent to become later a wine and spirit merchant and pub owner (Figure 67).⁹³¹

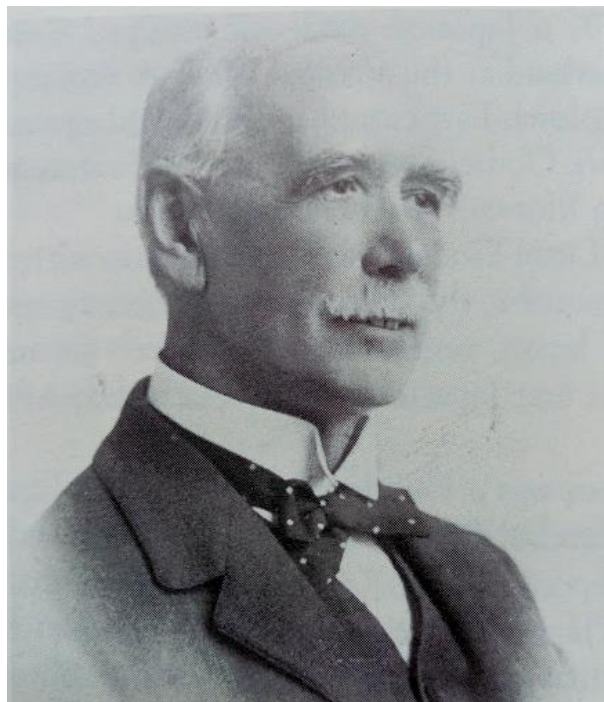


Figure 67 – Albert Howard Higginbottom. Photograph. In Marie Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England: From 1862 to the Present Day* (London: Athlone, 1989), 68.

According to Charles Bernard Stevenson (1874-1957), the first curator of the Laing Art Gallery, it was because of him that Higginbottom began to collect Japanese art. Stevenson later recalled in a manuscript the moment when Higginbottom came to his office and:

said that he would like to start a hobby, as he had retired from business, and he asked for the Curator's advice. There were two or three Japanese prints lying on the desk at the time and the Curator suggested that Mr. Higginbottom should collect Japanese prints and objects.⁹³²

Higginbottom went on to buy more than 1500 examples of Japanese colour prints, paintings, lacquerware, ceramics, arms, armour, bronzes, and ivories, which he donated to the Laing Art Gallery in 1919 as an expression of gratitude for his son's safe return from the First World War.⁹³³

⁹³¹ Marie Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England: From 1862 to the Present Day* (London: Athlone, 1989), 70; "Higginbottom, Albert Howard, brewer's agent, 27 Newgate St., residency 4 Percy Terrace." *Ward's Directory*, 1885-1886, Tyne and Wear Archives.

⁹³² Charles Bernard Stevenson. *Laing Art Gallery and Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne*. Tyne & Wear Archives, Newcastle Upon Tyne, 1954, T.132/62, 3. I am thankful to Laia Anguix for this information.

⁹³³ *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 26 July 1919.

Considering that the Laing curator moved to Newcastle from Nottingham only in 1904, it is highly possible that Higginbottom started to collect Japanese art right after Stevenson's arrival. It is then even more impressive that, despite the limited amount of time, Higginbottom succeeded in forming a massive collection. Unfortunately, there are no documents to reveal the origin of his purchases, but it cannot be excluded that he relied in part on the local market. However, he may have been helped by his son William Hugh Higginbottom (1881-1937), a painter, who attended the Royal Academy from 1901 to 1905 in London and after that, the Académie Julien in Paris for some years.⁹³⁴ These two metropolises were the capitals of the Japan mania in Europe as many East Asian art dealers had established shops there.

A further motivation that might have persuaded Higginbottom to start collecting Japanese art can be identified in the strong link between local industrial magnates and Japan. Japanese officials who visited Newcastle, appointed to place orders of warships at the local shipyards, were frequently hosted by Lord Armstrong or Andrew Noble (1831-1915) at their mansions in Jesmond Dene Park, the same place where Higginbottom built his house in 1900.⁹³⁵ One photo shows a Japanese stone lantern adorning his garden (Figure 68).



Figure 68 – Higginbottom's garden with a Japanese stone lantern on the right. Photograph. In Marie Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England: From 1862 to the Present Day* (London: Athlone, 1989), 69.

⁹³⁴ Marshall Hall, *The Artists of Northumbria: An Illustrated Dictionary of Northumberland, Newcastle upon Tyne, Durham and North East Yorkshire Painters, Sculptors, Engravers, Stained Glass Designers, Illustrators, Caricaturists and Cartoonists Born between 1625 and 1950* (Bristol: Art Dictionaries, 2005), 167-168.

⁹³⁵ As suggested by Marie Conte-Helm, Higginbottom was acquainted with Newcastle industrialist magnates who resided in Jesmond Dene, also because "he was proposed for associate membership to the North East Coast Institution of Engineers and Shipbuilders in 1913 by Sir Charles Parsons." Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 70.

Taking into consideration that, apart from the exhibition in 1913, Higginbottom's collection was always displayed in his house, it can be speculated that he might have privileged Japanese art also because he aspired to be part of the local elite that traded directly with Japan. The collection of Higginbottom represents a *unicum* in the North East. As Higginbottom wrote in the letter that he attached to his donation to the Laing Art Gallery:

These prints are fairly illustrative of the history, development and characteristics of Japanese colour printing. The collection will, I hope, be of great value to artists, designers, craftsmen and students, and the facilities for copying designs, etc., will, I trust, be taken advantage of. The collection should also afford some pleasure to the visitors of the Gallery.⁹³⁶

Japanese art was not exclusively appreciated as part of a private aesthetic experience but also as a valuable tool to inspire the local community of artists, artisans and the public. This is a great shift from the strong domestic connotation that originated Higginbottom's collection and permeated most of the other Japanese collections owned by North Eastern people. Moreover, the comprehensive approach of the wine and spirit merchant towards almost every artistic expression of Japanese culture distinguishes his collection from the others in the region, which were mainly focused on decorative goods such as ceramics, screens, and fans, as is discussed later in this chapter. This choice should be linked to the strong influence on Higginbottom played by the curator of the Laing Art Gallery "whose interest in all phases of Japanese Art is almost life-long," as a newspaper article stated in 1913.⁹³⁷ Having said that, it is possible that for Higginbottom collecting Japanese art was, at the same time, a way of being accepted by the local industrial elites linked with Japan, as well as, a demonstration of his refined and eclectic taste for exotic pieces of art which allowed him to stand out from the other local art collectors and be part of a global cultural phenomenon.⁹³⁸

In general, the high value that was attributed to Japanese artistic traditions is further testified by British artists and designers selectively appropriating Japanese themes and aesthetic principles by way of Japanese visual and material culture. In this regard, Geneviève Lacambre proposes that the reception of Japanese art in the second half of the nineteenth century can be divided into four stages:

⁹³⁶ *Newcastle Daily Journal*, 26 July 1919.

⁹³⁷ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 18 November 1913, 8.

⁹³⁸ In relation to the Higginbottom collection ambiguity, Marie Conte-Helm writes that it "provided the North East with a portrait of traditional Japan which both supported and contradicted the contemporary image of an increasingly formidable naval power looking to the region for both ships and guns, the equipment of modern warfare." Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 71-72.

1. Introduction of Japanese motifs into the repertoire of eclecticism, an addition that did not replace the decorative motifs of any specific time or country.
2. Preferential imitation of exotic and naturalistic Japanese motifs, with the latter being assimilated particularly quickly.
3. Imitation of refined techniques from Japan.
4. Analysis of the principles and methods that can be discovered in Japanese art and their application.⁹³⁹

For Lacambre, the first three stages should be regarded as mere variations of Orientalism; while the fourth consists in a sort of study practice, in which non-Japanese artists do not mechanically imitate Japanese art, but they attempt to understand its essential principles in order to incorporate them into their works. Beyond her strict categorisation which probably oversimplifies the complex and multidirectional development concerning the appropriation of Japanese aesthetic elements, Lacambre is right to underline the ways in which Japanese visual and material culture played a prominent role as a mediator throughout the different phases, functioning not only as a model to imitate and study, but also as part of common language between artists, designers, collectors, and consumers.

While to a limited extent in comparison with London, Glasgow, and the other artistic centres throughout Europe and the United States, this phenomenon was experienced also in the North East, for example, in the short-lived Gateshead Art Pottery.⁹⁴⁰ Established by John George Sowerby (1849–1914) in 1880, the firm was part of the family business Ellison Glass works, however, it lasted only for three years.⁹⁴¹ Between 1880 and 1883, Sowerby, who was also a painter and illustrator,⁹⁴² designed high-end artistic pottery with the help of collaborators such

⁹³⁹ “1. L’introduction de motifs japonais dans le répertoire de l’éclectisme, qui s’ajoutent sans aux motifs décoratifs de tous les temps et de tous les pays. 2. L’imitation préférentielle des motifs exotiques et naturalistes japonais, ces derniers étant le plus rapidement assimilés. 3. L’imitation des techniques raffinées du Japon. 4. L’analyse des principes et méthodes que l’on peut déceler dans l’art japonais et leur application.” Geneviève Lacambre, “Les Milieux Japonisants à Paris, 1860-1880,” *Japonisme in Art: An International Symposium*, edited by Chisaburō Yamada (Tokyo: Committee for the Year 2001, 1980), 49-50. Mabuchi Akiko proposes to extend Lacambre’s understanding to the whole European context Akiko Mabuchi, *Japonisumu: Gensou no Nihon* (Tokyo: Būri, 1986), as mentioned in Ayako Ono, *Japonisme in Britain: Whistler, Menpes, Henry, Hornel and Nineteenth-century Japan* (London, New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 3. Lacambre’s theories have been discussed also in Atsuko Ukai, “The History of Japonisme as a Global Study,” *Translation, History and Arts: New Horizons in Asian Interdisciplinary Humanities Research*, edited by Meng Ji and Atsuko Ukai (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 72; and in Daisuke Miyao, *Japonisme and the Birth of Cinema* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

⁹⁴⁰ For an introduction to the Gateshead Art Pottery, see Simon Cottle, *Sowerby: Gateshead Glass* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Tyne and Wear Museums Service, 1986).

⁹⁴¹ Patricia Riley, *Looking for Githa* (Newcastle upon Tyne: New Writing North, 2009) 34-36.

⁹⁴² Marshall Hall, *The Artists of Northumbria* (Bristol: Art Dictionaries, 2005), 316-317.

as Thomas Ralph Spence (1845-1918).⁹⁴³ Sowerby and Spence signed a plate in which two Japanese sumo wrestlers are depicted (Figure 69-Figure 70).



Figure 69 – The Gateshead Art Pottery, c.1880. Dish, ceramic. TWCMS: 2006.4838. Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead. Front.

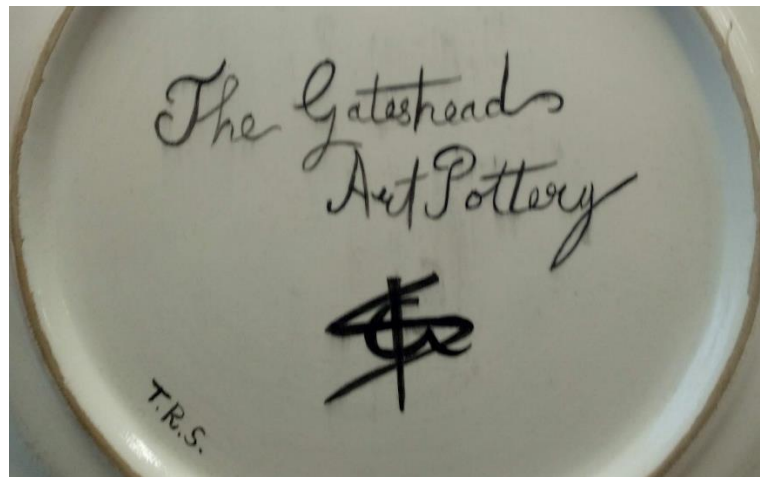


Figure 70 – The Gateshead Art Pottery, c.1880. Dish, ceramic. TWCMS: 2006.4838. Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead. Back Detail.

⁹⁴³ Spence was a painter and architect born in Richmond, Yorkshire. In the late 1880s, he designed St George's Church in Jesmond, Newcastle. For an introduction to Spence's biography, see, Neil Moat, *A Theatre for the Soul. St. George's Church, Jesmond: The Building and Cultural Reception of a Late-Victorian Church*, PhD thesis, Newcastle University, 2011, 31-33.

The design was probably copied directly from an original Japanese source, as suggested by the similarities with *ukiyo-e* prints of the same genre published in Edo from the late eighteenth century (Figure 71), which could have been imported to Europe and the United States following the end of Japan's self-imposed isolation in 1854.



Figure 71 –Sumo Wrestlers of the Eastern Group: Kurateyama Yadayu [right], and Izumigawa Rin'emon [left] c. 1780. Katsukawa Shunshō (1726–1793). Color Woodblock Print. Art Institute of Chicago.

Considering the popularity of Japanese decorative objects in the North East from the 1860s, it is no surprise that local firms attempted to take advantage of the popularity of Japanese prints. A British inspiration for such direct reference to Japanese woodblock prints might have been the set of tiles made by Wedgwood & Sons around 1875, which was copied from a series of prints by Utagawa Kunikazu (Figure 72).⁹⁴⁴ However, the attention to certain details in the plate made at the Gateshead Art Pottery is superior to that of the Wedgwood tiles. When studying the figures' faces in the latter, they bear little resemblance to the Japanese *ukiyo-e* style, and were probably drawn freehand by a British artist, rather than diligently copied from the original source as was the Gateshead Art Pottery plate.

⁹⁴⁴ Maureen Batkin, *Wedgwood Ceramics 1846-1959* (London: Richard Dennis Publications, 1982), 108.



Figure 72 – Josiah Wedgwood & Sons Etruria, c.1875. Tile, earthenware. 1995,0713.1-8. British Museum, London. Detail.

Other ceramics designed by Sowerby further exemplified this point, adding another layer: the allusion to the physicality of the Japanese objects from which the composition was copied. The first is a plate decorated with a fan design reproduced with the inclusion of the handle in bamboo (Figure 73), which is usually omitted in Japanese printed sources. In the second, a *ukiyo-e* print is depicted in its entirety, giving the illusion that it was attached on the surface of the plate, rather than part of the decorative composition (Figure 75).



Figure 73 – The Gateshead Art Pottery, c.1880. Dish, ceramic. TWCMS: D636. Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead. Front.

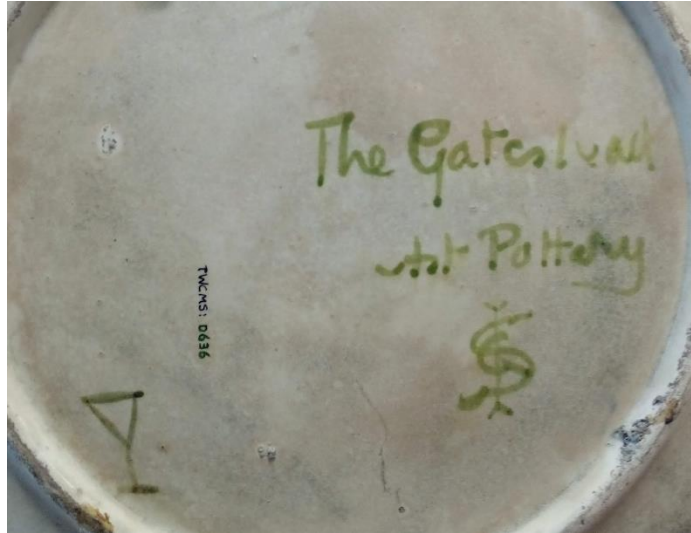


Figure 74 – The Gateshead Art Pottery, c.1880. Dish, ceramic. TWCMS: D636. Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead. Back, detail.

In this regard, rather than Spence, this thesis suggests that Sowerby was the person behind this decision as only his mark is painted in the back of the last two pieces (Figure 74, Figure 76). Therefore, by addressing the materiality of Japanese articles such as fans and prints, and reproducing them as carefully as possible, Sowerby aimed to create a strong link with the original objects in order to take advantage of their agency as fashionable artistic products desirable to collectors and consumers in the North East.



Figure 75 – The Gateshead Art Pottery, c.1880. Dish, ceramic. The Gateshead Art Pottery. TWCMS: 2002.170. Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead. Front

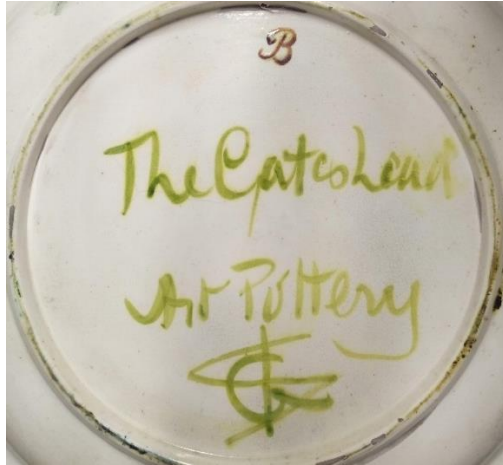


Figure 76 – The Gateshead Art Pottery, c.1880. Dish, ceramic. The Gateshead Art Pottery. TWCMS: 2002.170. Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead. Back, Detail.

While Sowerby relied on the direct copying of Japanese objects to attract his clientele, the Linthorpe Art Pottery, another firm in the region, opted for an alternative approach of incorporating certain Japanese aesthetic principles into their ceramics. Opened in Middlesbrough in 1879, John Harrison, the owner, appointed Henry Tooth as pottery manager and the designer Christopher Dresser as art director.⁹⁴⁵ Dresser, who had been interested in Japanese art since 1862 and had just come back from a trip to Japan in 1877, had a relevant impact on the early period of Linthorpe & Co., sending designs which incorporated Japanese aesthetic elements and motifs that Middlesbrough potters modelled and fired, such as the so-called Tsunami Vase (design 2151) in which Hokusai's *Great Wave* was recontextualised (Figure 77).



Figure 77 – “Tsunami” Vase, 1880. Christopher Dresser (1834–1904) and Linthorpe Art Pottery. Vase, ceramic. OK-1985-0001. The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo.

⁹⁴⁵ Jonathan Le Vine, *Linthorpe Pottery: An Interim Report* (Middlesbrough: Teesside Museums & Art Galleries Service, 1970), 1-2.

However, Dresser's influence was not the sole source of inspiration for Linthorpe potters who had first-hand experience of Japanese objects. As discussed by Jonathan Le Vine, in Linthorpe's studios "the artists worked in clean spacious gas-lit rooms, on the walls of which Japanese silks and other pictures hung as a source of inspiration to the occupants."⁹⁴⁶

The cases of Gateshead Art Pottery and Linthorpe exemplify the diverse ways in which firms in the North East responded to the stimuli of Japanese visual and material culture, suggesting that the increasing accessibility to Japanese objects in the region from the late 1870s was not only reflected in public events and private collections, but also in the production of local manufactures.

Japanese Objects as Signs of Status and Identity

In addition to its influence on consumer taste and aesthetic values, the ambiguity associated with Japanese visual and material culture further reveals its relevance when analysed as a sign of class status and social identity. As theorised by Walter Benjamin:

Ambiguity is the appearance of dialectic in images, the law of dialectics at a standstill. This standstill is utopia and the dialectical image, therefore, dream image. Such an image is afforded by the commodity per se: as fetish.⁹⁴⁷

Borrowing from the German philosopher, this section argues that the ambiguous and idealised Japan was appropriated through Japanese decorative objects by members of different social classes, accommodating their respective needs, or using Benjamin's words, "fetish[es]."

For example, the auction sale catalogues discussed early in this chapter offer an interesting spectrum of how diverse the consumers of Japanese objects in the North East were, including members of the middle class, aristocrats, and clergymen. Taking into consideration this diversification, Japanese articles should be considered what Jan de Vries calls a "new luxury." According to the scholar, "new luxury" is a sociable and inclusive form of luxury that he contrasts with "old luxury," a type of consumption that thrived at court and served mainly to demarcate social status.⁹⁴⁸ Even if de Vries's original aim was to describe the shift in the seventeenth century Dutch Republic which anticipated most of the elements that other scholars

⁹⁴⁶ Le Vine, *Linthorpe Pottery*, 7.

⁹⁴⁷ Walter Benjamin, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century," *The Arcades Project*, translated by H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999), 10. See also, Caitlin Vandertop, "The Colonies in Concrete: Walter Benjamin, Urban Form and the Dreamworlds of Empire." *Interventions* 18, no.5 (2016): 709–729.

⁹⁴⁸ Jan De Vries, "Luxury in the Dutch Golden Age in Theory and Practice," *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, edited by Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 41-44.

identify as modern consumer culture, this concept is borrowed in order to underline the social aspect of the consumption of Japanese articles in the latter half of the nineteenth century, which involved the rise of the Victorian middle class.

According to Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, only from the middle of the nineteenth century could members of the middle class be considered a “powerful unified culture.”⁹⁴⁹ This process of emancipation started in the eighteenth century and saw official recognition in parliamentary reforms such as the Great Reform Act in 1832 and the Representation of the People Act 1867: two pivotal changes in the electoral system that enlarged voting rights.⁹⁵⁰ One of the consequences of these reforms was that talented middle-class businessmen became the new symbol of success and the myth of self-made men started to be a strategy for self-promoting.⁹⁵¹

Purchasing and collecting Japanese decorative objects represented one of the main responses to this new sensibility. Following Arjun Appadurai, purchasing luxury goods was not a passive response to the new consumer society, but a way of sending and receiving messages always driven by the need to ascertain social status.⁹⁵² In other words, collecting art and purchasing luxury goods represented acts of social and cultural self-recognition for middle-class Victorians.⁹⁵³ In general, middle-class Victorians appeared to be naturally attracted to highly finished manufactured products, and in many cases, imported luxury goods fell into that category quite easily, with the advantage being that they were less expensive than their European counterparts. According to Macleod, this phenomenon was related to the fact that, in the eyes of the middle-class collector, the high degree of finish represented an unmistakable proof of the artisan’s work ethic, a social value that differentiated the productive middle class to the decadent aristocracy.⁹⁵⁴ As already discussed, the work ethic of Japanese artisans had

⁹⁴⁹ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 23.

⁹⁵⁰ John Harrison and Fletcher Clews, *The Early Victorian, 1832-1851* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971), 50.

⁹⁵¹ François Courzet, *The First Industrialist: The Problem of Origins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 44.

⁹⁵² Arjun Appadurai, “Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value,” *The Social Life of Things*, edited by Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 31.

⁹⁵³ Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class: Money and Making of Cultural Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 44-45.

⁹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 125.

been praised in England since the 1870s, as well as the high degree of refinement of Japanese decorative objects.

Middle-class culture in the North East of England was also deeply associated with the concept of modernity, as well as the need to find a compromise with tradition. As defined by Eric Hobsbawm, tradition should be conceptualised as “a set of practices, [...] which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, [implying] continuity with the past.”⁹⁵⁵ Therefore, finding a compromise between “discontinued” modernity and tradition became a crucial challenge for Victorian businessmen, especially in arranging their country houses, and in that regard, Japanese decorative objects represented one of the possible solutions. As noted by Macleod “while they enjoyed many of the traditional perquisites of wealth, [Victorian businessmen] asserted their independence from the aristocratic model in other regards.”⁹⁵⁶ In the case of the “integrated elite” of entrepreneurs in Newcastle,⁹⁵⁷ the comfort given by the latest inventions perfectly solved this potential issue. For example, in the description of the country house owned by Joseph W. Swan (1828-1914), the inventor of the incandescent light bulb, it is mentioned that:

in the middle of the table, between the standards, is a large Japanese calabash stuffed with fresh-blown roses, among which electric lamps are cunningly hid. At a touch of the finger on some invisible key, these lamps are filled with yellow lustre, and seem to blossom like the flowers themselves.⁹⁵⁸

Beyond clearly reaffirming the career achievement of the house owner, the insertion of electric lamps in a flower arrangement aimed to normalise the dichotomy of nature/technology.⁹⁵⁹ The Japanese calabash, also called bottle gourd, is a fruit that could be eaten as a vegetable or used as a liquid vessel, and its characteristic curvy shape was often chosen as a decorative pattern in Japan. These different uses demonstrate an ambivalent identity, from a natural product to an everyday tool. Therefore, it is possible that Swan, or his wife, decided on that unusual vase in order to normalise the potential dichotomy between the roses and the electric lamps.⁹⁶⁰

⁹⁵⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.

⁹⁵⁶ Macleod, *Art and the Victorian Middle Class*, 219-220.

⁹⁵⁷ Oliver Lendrum, “An Integrated Elite: Newcastle’s Economic Development 1840–1914,” Newcastle upon Tyne, edited by Robert Colls and Bill Lancaster (Chichester: Phillimore, 2001), 27-46.

⁹⁵⁸ *Newcastle Courant*, 13 February 1885, 6.

⁹⁵⁹ See also, Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 245-266; Marilyn Palmer and Ian West, *Technology in the Country House* (Swindon: Historic England, 2016).

⁹⁶⁰ Swan might have acquired the Japanese gourd from his shop, Mawson, Swan and Morgan, in Newcastle, in which Japanese decorative objects were on sale from the 1870s (Figure 56).

A very similar attitude was pursued by William Armstrong as demonstrated by his cloisonné lamps located in the library in Cragside (Figure 78). The renowned industrial magnate decided to convert various original Chinese cloisonné vases to electric lamps in the early 1880s, a gesture that might be read as an appropriation of the eighteenth century aristocratic culture, symbolised by the porcelain; while, at the same time, their adaptation as electric lamps provided him a way to distance himself from that social class, by embracing the technological progress. This approach was in line with the house as a whole: a castle-like mansion, but with the full comfort of a hydroelectric system.⁹⁶¹



Figure 78 – Electric Lamp, c.1881. Cloisonné. NT 1228271.1. Library, Cragside, Rothbury.

Turning its focus to Japanese decorative objects, the house collection represents the entrepreneur's swift response to new trends while directly referencing his achievements as a

⁹⁶¹ As suggested by Dianne Macleod, ambivalence “was an essential component in Armstrong’s character. [...] Armstrong wanted to preserve the independence which had won him his fortune, but also to enjoy the charms of the aristocratic life,” Dianne Sachko Macleod, “Armstrong the Collector,” *Cragside* (London: National Trust, 1992), 36.

businessman. According to Mark Girouard, Richard Norman Shaw (1831-1912), the architect who designed Cragside, was directly responsible also for the interior decoration: the profusion of East Asian pottery in the library, for example, should be considered Shaw's decision, because he depicted it in his original designs for the room.⁹⁶² Overall the arrangement reflects Shaw's influences in the 1870s, namely "the Middles Ages as seen through pre-Raphaelite eyes, and the Orient"⁹⁶³ (Figure 79).⁹⁶³ In the photo taken in 1891, it is possible to identify a Japanese Cloisonné plate that might have been manufactured in the last quarter of the nineteenth century (Figure 80-Figure 81).



Figure 79 – Library in Cragside, 1891. Henry Bedford Lemere, (1865-1944). Photograph. Historic England Archive.

⁹⁶² Mark Girouard, "Cragside, Northumberland - II: The Home of Lord and Lady Armstrong," *Country Life* (25 December 1869), 1695-1696.

⁹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 1695.



Figure 80 – Library in Cragside, 1891. Detail.



Figure 81 – Japanese Plate, Meiji Period (1869-1912). Cloisonné. NT 1228308.1, Cragside, Rothbury.

With regard to Armstrong’s business successes, since the 1860s, the industrialist had developed a profitable economic relationship with Japan: initially limited to firearms such as the Armstrong gun, deployed by Japan in the Boshin War (1868-1869); and from the 1880s in providing warships and armaments that Japan employed against China (1894-5) and Russia (1904-5). To maintain a friendly relationship, visiting Japanese officials frequently offered gifts: for example, in 1872 they shipped two porcelain vases that Armstrong described as “the

finest by far that I have ever seen.”⁹⁶⁴ Although they have not been identified yet, it is highly possible that Armstrong proudly displayed them in one of his mansions.⁹⁶⁵ The same occurred in the first half of the twentieth century, as Tokugawa Yorisada (1892-1954), a Japanese royal family member, gifted the Armstrong family various Japanese *ukiyo-e* prints and other items when he visited Cragside in 1916, 1929 and 1951.⁹⁶⁶ It was decided to display these gifts together in a room, later named the “Japanese room” (Figure 82).



Figure 82 – Japanese Room in Cragside. Photograph. Cragside, Rothbury.

Armstrong was not the only local industrialist that traded directly with Japan. In the last quarter of the century, Japanese companies started to purchase a large amount of iron and steel products from Middlesbrough firms such as Bolckow, Vaughan & Co., Ltd.⁹⁶⁷ Among the industrialists in Middlesbrough known to have owned Japanese decorative objects was Carl Ferdinand Henry Bolckow (1835-1915). Born in Prussia, Bolckow is documented as residing in Britain from 1871, but did not move to Middlesbrough until he inherited the family business following the

⁹⁶⁴ Cited in Henrietta Heald, *William Armstrong: Magician of the North* (Alnwick: Northumbria Press, 2010), 204.

⁹⁶⁵ A Japanese suit of armour owned by the Armstrong family is now held in Bamburgh Castle, Northumberland Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 72.

⁹⁶⁶ Tokugawa Yorisada was part of the Japanese royal family, being the uncle of Princess, who became Empress Consort of Japan in 1925. Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 104; Heald, *William Armstrong*, 210.

⁹⁶⁷ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 14.

death of his uncle, Henry William Ferdinand Bolckow (1806-1878), who in partnership with John Vaughan (1799-1868) founded Bolckow, Vaughan & Co., Ltd.⁹⁶⁸ In 1907 Carl sold by auction part of his properties, including the furniture and fittings of his mansion, Marton Hall. In the catalogue of the sale, nine Japanese objects are listed, comprising three Japanese screens, various ceramics and examples of lacquerware.⁹⁶⁹ There is no information about when those articles entered the Bolckow estate, but they successfully represent the kind of Japanese objects that were popular in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. It is worth pointing out that they were located in both feminine and masculine rooms of the house: one of the Japanese screens was in the boudoir, while a Japanese lacquer-box was in the library. Also listed amongst the contents of the library was the fictional novel written by Clive Holland entitled *My Japanese Wife* (2nd ed., 1902), which testifies a further fascination with the idealised representation of Japan.⁹⁷⁰

Some of the industrialists who formed collections of Japanese objects visited Japan. For example, John Noble (1865-1938), son of Armstrong's collaborator Andrew Noble, moved to Tokyo with his wife Amie (1879-1973) during the Russo-Japanese war in order to maintain close links with the Japanese Navy.⁹⁷¹ The "Miss Noble" that lent some Japanese articles for the exhibition at the Laing in 1913 might have been the daughter of them, Rosemary Elizabeth.⁹⁷² Similarly, George W. Squire, general manager of a paper-manufactory company in Sunderland between 1915 and 1930, resided in Japan from 1898 to 1907, working for the Shenju Kaisha.⁹⁷³ During his residence there, he amassed a diverse assortment of material such as Meiji Period woodblock prints, lacquerware, ceramics, and kimonos, which were later donated to the Oriental Museum in Durham.

⁹⁶⁸ *The Times*, 29 March 1892.

⁹⁶⁹ *Catalogue of Furniture from Marton Hall by C. F. H. Bolckow, 1907*. Teesside Archives, U/ZX/2/9, lott. 473, 562, 620, 797, 933.

⁹⁷⁰ *Library of Marton Hall, sold at Temperance Hall in Middlesbrough, by C. F. H. Bolckow, 1907*. Teesside Archives, lot. 273. The first edition of *My Japanese Wife* is dated 1897. For a literary analysis of the book, see, Elizabeth Sara McAdams, "Turning Japanese: Japonisme in Victorian Literature and Culture," PhD Thesis (University of Michigan, 2016), 144-150.

⁹⁷¹ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 41-42, 74-75.

⁹⁷² It cannot be excluded that, instead of Rosemary Elizabeth, the Miss Noble who lent her collection for the Laing exhibition might have been a daughter of one of John's brothers, George or Saxton.

⁹⁷³ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 73.

North Eastern gentry also collected or acquired Japanese objects. In most of the aristocratic residences in the region, it is possible to find such collections, and they are mainly associated with the *elitist* taste, demonstrated by the strong prevalence of articles that can be linked to specific Japanese manufactures during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As Japanese lacquerware and ceramics had been revered since the early eighteenth century, it is not surprising to find examples of these in Alnwick Castle, the home of the Earls and Dukes of Northumberland since 1309. The Earl's collection includes specimens of seventeenth century Kakiemon and Imari porcelains, two fine examples of Japanese export art that reached Europe via Dutch merchants, who, together with the Chinese, were the only ones allowed to trade with Japan in the Edo period (1603-1854).⁹⁷⁴

Similar objects can be found at Wallington Hall, in which the Japanese collection comprises an eighteenth-century cabinet and many examples of refined Japanese porcelain. The mansion dated from the end of the seventeenth century and has been home of the Blackett and then the Trevelyan families. According to Michael Archer, a prominent part of the ceramic collection should be associated with the wife of the second Sir John Trevelyan (1761–1846), Maria Wilson, who “in 1791 [...] brought a large number of pieces with her as part of her dowry.”⁹⁷⁵ In the early twentieth century, another member of the Trevelyan family, George Otto (1838-1928), was responsible for the further additions of Japanese pieces after he sold various Chinese vases.⁹⁷⁶ George had a sincere enthusiasm for East Asian ceramics and he explicitly wrote in his notebook in 1888: “This year I finished rearranging the China, a long and delightful labour of love.”⁹⁷⁷ This passion is testified to even in the book collection in which it was possible to find volumes published in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century that dealt with various aspects relating to Asian and European ceramic production.⁹⁷⁸ Another similar, “aristocratic” collection of Japanese ceramics is held in the Bowes Museum, Barnard Castle, formed by John (1811-1885) and Joséphine Bowes (1825-1874), as already discussed in the second chapter of

⁹⁷⁴ Gregory Irvine, *A Guide to Japanese Art Collections in the UK* (Amsterdam: Hotei, 2004), 163.

⁹⁷⁵ Michael Archer, “The Making of a Ceramic Collection: Pottery and Porcelain at Wallington,” *Country Life* (18 June 1970), 1135.

⁹⁷⁶ Unfortunately, there is no information whether the selling of Chinese vases was completed in order to buy Japanese pieces. *Ibid.*, 1139.

⁹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1135.

⁹⁷⁸ Johan G. T Graesse, *Guide de l'Amateur de Porcelaines et de Poteries* (1885); William Chaffers, *Marks and Monograms on European and Oriental Pottery and Porcelain*, 10th edition (1903); Willoughby Hogson, *How to identify Old Chinese Porcelain* (1905). Listed in Christopher John Hunt, *Catalogue of the Library at Wallington Hall, Northumberland* (Newcastle: University of Newcastle, 1968).

this thesis.⁹⁷⁹ Overall, although they were mainly associated with the arising middle-class culture, Japanese decorative objects never lost their exotic appeal for the aristocracy and the other upper classes which, however, concentrated their interest in the “old” luxury, namely the kind of items such as seventeenth- and eighteenth-century export porcelain associated with elitist consumption.

To testify to the extent of the fascination towards Japanese objects in the region, it is important to mention also the acquisitions of clergymen, whose interest in Japanese articles further corroborates the idea that they were perceived as morally acceptable goods to have at home. For example, in 1869 the property owned by Reverend George Heriot was auctioned in Newcastle and among the possessions a “beautiful Japanese worktable” is listed.⁹⁸⁰ It was located in the drawing room of his house in Jesmond Terrace. According to his obituary, Heriot came from a renowned Scottish family and had been in service at St. Anne’s Church in Newcastle for 24 years when he died in 1869.⁹⁸¹ In the following decades, further clergymen were mentioned in local newspapers in relation to Japanese objects: in market towns such as Darlington in 1878,⁹⁸² but also industrial centres such as Wallsend in 1886.⁹⁸³ The fact that Japanese objects are documented even in households owned by men of the church testifies how Japanese decorative objects were more than welcome in any sort of private environment.

Japanese Objects as Vehicles of Meaning

Exhibiting an eclectic taste in order to assert one’s social status was not the only purpose of collecting, owning, or displaying decorative objects in the Victorian period. Conversely, Michael Ettema has argued that “the [other main] purpose of furniture was to serve as a guide to the appropriate behaviour in each room.”⁹⁸⁴ As Grier underlines:

⁹⁷⁹ Comprising mostly in pieces of Imari, Kakiemon and Arita ware that were acquired from French antique dealers. I am thankful to Lindsay Macnaughton and Simon Spier for this information. See also, Sue Thompson, “Japanese export art at the Bowes Museum,” *Arts of Asia* 21, no. 5 (1991): 115-124; and Caroline Chapman and Adrian Jenkins, *John & Josephine: The Creation of the Bowes Museum* (Barnard Castle: Bowes Museum, 2010).

⁹⁸⁰ *Newcastle Daily Chronicle*, 8 December 1869, 1.

⁹⁸¹ *Newcastle Journal*, 23 October 1869, 3

⁹⁸² Reverend R. T. Mosse owned a Japanese cabinet. *Northern Echo*, 16 May 1878, 4.

⁹⁸³ Reverend Richard Jenkins owned a Japanese work-stand. *Durham County Advertiser*, 16 July 1886, 4.

⁹⁸⁴ Michael Ettema, “The Fashion System in American Furniture,” *Living in a Material World: Canadian and American Approaches to Material Culture*, edited by Gerald Pocius (St. John’s: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 1991), 194.

Decor did not simply express character but helped to create it. Victorian consumers understood that objects were culture in tangible form and that possessions inappropriate to the social class of the family who owned them were a potential source of danger because they sent conflicting messages to both their owners and outsiders.⁹⁸⁵

With regard to Japanese decorative objects, the risk to send “conflicting messages” was almost absent. As discussed, while the lack of idealism and morality was one of the few critiques made against Japanese art right after the 1862 London exhibition, mediators such as the authors of domestic advice manuals revised this preconception. This change of perspective is testified even in the North East of England by the popularity of Japanese decorative articles in homes owned by clergymen and individuals that professed themselves as protestant denominations such as Methodists or Quakers, who traditionally advocated for a simple and strict lifestyle.

For example, Joseph Whitwell Pease (1828-1903), a prominent member of the Quaker community of Darlington owned a Japanese collection (Figure 83). In 1902, following the failure of his own bank,⁹⁸⁶ Pease was forced to sell part of his properties and his art collection.⁹⁸⁷ The auction sale catalogue of his furnishing and fittings reveals that he owned almost 50 Japanese objects in his country house called Hutton Hall, close to Guisborough, North Yorkshire.



Figure 83 – Joseph Whitwell Pease, c.1897. In *Saltburn by the Sea and its Environs*. PR/EAT(2)/5/2. Teesside Archives, Middlesbrough.

⁹⁸⁵ Grier, *Culture & Comfort*, 8.

⁹⁸⁶ Christopher Dean, “A Credit Crunch: The Story of J. & J.W. Pease. Part 2: The Storm Breaks,” *North Eastern Express: The Journal of North Eastern Railway Association* 48, no. 196 (2009): 131-136.

⁹⁸⁷ Frederick, “A Quaker Collects,” 68.

His Japanese collection comprised folding screens, fans, bronzes, mirrors, and an extensive set of ceramics. His ceramics included examples of Satsuma, Kutani, and Seto wares, as well as highly decorative pieces such as a “very fine Japanese vase, richly gilt and ornamented with medallions of ancient and modern Japanese combats,” almost 60 cm tall:⁹⁸⁸ the type of Japanese Meiji craft item exhibited in international expositions and exported all over the world. The photograph of the entrance hall taken around 1897 shows numerous porcelains; however, it is difficult to identify the Japanese pieces (Figure 84).



Figure 84 – Entrance Hall, Hutton Hall, Guisborough, c. 1897. In *Saltburn by the Sea and its Environs*. PR/EAT(2)/5/2. Teesside Archives, Middlesbrough.

While Pease’s Japanese collection can be associated with the popularity of the Japanese decorative arts in the later nineteenth century, his involvement in humanitarian causes such as the suppression of the opium trade in British colonies might reveal a further motivation for his collecting. In 1895, he proposed to the House of Commons the ban of the opium trade in India and published a brief pamphlet to promote this idea. Interestingly, he and his collaborators

⁹⁸⁸ *Library, China, Paintings, etc. from Hutton Hall, recently occupied by the Sir Jos W. Pease, Bart.* Middlesbrough, Teesside Archives, U/ZX/2/7, 1903, lot. 1118.

decided to use China as a bad example of the wider and diffuse consumption of opium, underlining how “from its effect [Chinese] people were surely deteriorating.”⁹⁸⁹ In order to emphasise this aspect, Pease quotes a British correspondent who was working for the Chinese government who calls opium an “enormous evil.”⁹⁹⁰ The same correspondent contrasts Japan with China, stating:

with her loyal exemption from the use of the drug, is providing more than a match for China, now almost overpowered by it. [...] Japan is a most dangerous enemy, but even if China can withstand a Japanese invasion she can never survive unless this soul and body destroying poison is completely exterminated.⁹⁹¹

The author was referring to the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), which Japan successfully fought aided by the warships ordered from Lord Armstrong’s shipyards. Furthermore, the pamphlet also stated that Britain, one of the main suppliers of opium to China, should terminate that trade “which is immoral in its character and consequences.”⁹⁹² Focusing on Japan, it is undeniable that Pease wanted to use the Japanese decision to forbid any opium trade as an example that the British government should follow.

Taking into consideration the Japanese collection held in the Pease’s country house, it is then possible to assume that an idealist such as Joseph Whitwell Pease admired the Japanese objects in his home for reasons beyond their decorative qualities. The affinity between the Pease family and Japan can be dated back to the 1860s, when Edward Pease, the father of Joseph Whitwell, spoke in favour of Japan and against the military actions undertaken by the British Government on Japanese soil with regard to the bombing of Kagoshima in 1863.⁹⁹³ In addition to advice literature, which promoted a moral image of Japan based on the sincerity and work ethic of the idealisation of Japanese artisans, the example of Joseph Whitwell has shown that an empathy based on historical events were also possible.

Another factor that had led to a change of perspective toward the initial preconceptions about Japanese objects might be identified in the comfort associated with them. Comfort is a multifaceted concept which can be positioned somewhere between necessity and luxury, taking

⁹⁸⁹ Joseph Whitwell Pease, *The Indian Opium Trade* (London: Society for the Suppression of the Opium Trade, 1895), 10. See also, John Crangle, “Joseph Whitwell Pease and the Quaker Role in the Campaign to Suppress the Opium Trade in the British Empire,” *Quaker History* 68, no. 2 (1979): 63–74.

⁹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁹⁹² *Ibid.*, 12.

⁹⁹³ *Illustrated Berwick Journal*, 28 August 1863, 3.

into account the unstable, ever-changing nature of both conditions. John Crowley dates its origin to the first half of the eighteenth century, when “theories of political economy made comfort a legitimizing motive for popular consumption patterns.”⁹⁹⁴ Turning to the nineteenth century, Katherine Grier states:

Comfort not only signals a group of ideas and beliefs associated with a pleasurable physical state but also designates a presence of a more family-centered values associated with “home,” values emphasizing domesticity, perfect sincerity, and moderation in all things.⁹⁹⁵

According to Clive Edwards, in the latter part of the nineteenth century, this concept was associated “with the old, the traditional and the natural as opposed to the modern and urban.”⁹⁹⁶ These characteristics were often related to the idealised image of Japan and its aesthetic, emphasised by mediators such as retailers and the other arbiters of taste.

In order to explore the association between Japanese decorative objects and the English idea of comfort, it is necessary to analyse two of its main features: physical comfort and emotional comfort. The former is linked to aspects as practical as keeping the house warm, neat and tidy; while the latter represents the sentimental relationship between the owner and his possessions.

With regard to Japanese decorative objects, the first aspect that can be associated with the physical comfort is the multi-functionality of many of the Japanese articles that came to be found in the Victorian house that profoundly helped, together with their increasing affordability, to dispel the image of Japanese objects as aristocratic luxuries just for display. In general, this functionalism was part of a longer-term process which started at the end of the eighteenth century,⁹⁹⁷ and was considered crucial for social progress.⁹⁹⁸ Taking into consideration the most popular Japanese decorative articles in the North East such as fans, screens, umbrellas, lacquerware, and ceramics and bronzes, only the latter did not serve more than one purpose. As already discussed, retailers in the North East advertised and promoted Japanese fans as “quite a cooling influence for June,”⁹⁹⁹ but also “for decoration.”¹⁰⁰⁰ In addition to the latter function, Japanese folding screens could have been used to create a little space of privacy within a room

⁹⁹⁴ John Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort: Sensibilities & Design in Early Modern Britain & Early America* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 143.

⁹⁹⁵ Grier, *Culture & Comfort*, 2.

⁹⁹⁶ Edwards, *Turning Houses into Homes*, 162.

⁹⁹⁷ Crowley, *The Invention of Comfort*, 147.

⁹⁹⁸ Paul Slack, *The Invention of Improvement: Information and Material Progress in Seventeenth-century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 215-228.

⁹⁹⁹ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 8 June 1882, 1.

¹⁰⁰⁰ *Northern Echo*, 1 December 1894, 1.

and prevent undesired cold draughts inside the house;¹⁰⁰¹ while Japanese umbrella or parasol could hide unsightly elements such as the fireplace when not in use, as suggested in an article published in the *Newcastle Courant*.¹⁰⁰² Obviously, there were also refined pieces that were just for display, but, as Sarah Cheang suggests with regard to East Asian porcelain, this type of luxury retained its “commodity status, failing to sever its link with consumption.”¹⁰⁰³ It can be argued that the idea of consumption should also include the function of everyday use, since Japanese lacquerware and ceramics were purchased with this purpose in mind as well as for display in cabinets or on fireplaces. In short, even if Japanese objects were considered principally an exotic and decorative luxury, their multi-functionality, including their practical uses, also played a role in bringing a sense of comfort to British homes.

Moving from physical to emotional comfort, the phenomenon of consuming and collecting Japanese decorative objects should be analysed in relation to evoking the feeling of escapism shared among Victorian people at all ages. As Holly Edwards suggests:

The purpose of exotic objects was a manifold endeavour, providing the home a veneer of cosmopolitan luxury and the owner an opportunity of fantasy, [as an antidote to] rigid norms of Victorian society.¹⁰⁰⁴

A childhood memory narrated by Joseph Crouch (1859–1936) and Edmund Butler, architects and authors of a domestic advice manual, perfectly illustrates how this feeling was associated with everyday objects such as a screen. They write:

A screen is useful for other purposes than merely to prevent draught. There is a charm about a screen reminiscent probably of childhoods days when we shut ourselves up in little corners and so formed worlds of our own. [...] The Art of Japan is not yet a thing of the past, and to those desiring to add a screen to their household gear we could not give better advice than to choose with discretion one of those delightful productions of that wonderful land.¹⁰⁰⁵

The memory of creating an artificial space using a screen reveals the desire for a safe, intimate, and comfortable household environment in which one could fantasise about imaginary worlds. The fact that the authors decided to mention Japanese screens immediately after this biographical anecdote suggests an emotional association between the architects and that kind of furniture.

¹⁰⁰¹ *Northern Echo*, 26 December 1891, 1.

¹⁰⁰² *Newcastle Courant*, 18 July 1879, 3.

¹⁰⁰³ Sarah Cheang, “The Dogs of Fo: Gender, Identity and Collecting,” *Collectors: Expressions of Self and Other*, edited by Anthony Shelton (London: Horniman Museum, 2001), 60.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Holly Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 32.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Crouch, *The Apartments of the House* (London: At the Sign of the Unicorn, 1900), 163-163.

Daydreaming about Japan should not be considered a solitary activity, on the contrary, the presence of Japanese articles in spaces dedicated to socialising such as drawing rooms and parlours suggests the opposite. As John Cornforth has argued, the purpose of a comfortable house was to create an environment in which it was possible to relax and enjoy company in an informal manner. In other words, it was crucial for the householder to acquire particular types of furniture and decorative articles to create an arrangement that facilitated the right kind of informality.¹⁰⁰⁶ Focusing in particular on Japanese objects, this specific aspect in relation to the emotional comfort, intimacy, and escapism is represented in a poem entitled “A Japanese Fan” (1876), written by Margaret Veley (1843-1887) and published in the *Cornhill Magazine*.¹⁰⁰⁷

The poem speaks of two individuals stuck in a house because of pouring rain. Taking inspiration from a Japanese fan depicting a beautiful woman, one of the two starts to narrate the story of an unsuccessful attempt at seduction claiming that he/she was translating the Japanese writings inscribed on the fan. Ironically, a similar result occurs at the end of the poem, when the second individual willingly misunderstands the true intention of the first person telling the story. Even if the gender of the two is never explicitly revealed, an illustration with a flirtatious heterosexual couple is placed in the frontispiece of the poem (Figure 85). As suggested by Virginia Blain, this might have been a decision of the editor to avoid any eventual ‘immoral’ reading caused by the protagonists’ gender uncertainty.¹⁰⁰⁸ However, even assuming the heterosexuality of the situation, the “I” that appears in the poem, mainly assigned to the masculine seducer, contrasts with the author’s gender, a technique not new to Veley.¹⁰⁰⁹ Beyond Veley’s poetry style, what is relevant for this study is the parallel between the two feminine figures, the Japanese woman and the person listening to the story, as well as the empathy between them sealed by the Japanese fan.

¹⁰⁰⁶ For an introduction, see, John Cornforth, *English Interiors, 1799–1848. The Quest for Comfort* (London: Barrie and Jenkins, 1978).

¹⁰⁰⁷ Margaret Veley, “A Japanese Fan,” *Cornhill Magazine* 34 (1876): 379-384. The poem was later published in a posthumous collection of Veley’s works entitled *A Marriage of Shadows* (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1888), 69-78.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Virginia Blain, “Sexual Politics of the (Victorian) Closet; or, No Sex Please — We’re Poets,” *Women’s Poetry, Late Romantic to Late Victorian*, edited by Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), 147.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Veley later adopted the same strategy in *Almond Blossom* (1881). See Joseph Bristow, “Reassessing Margaret Veley’s Poetry: The Value of Harper’s Transatlantic Spirit,” *Essay and Studies: Victorian Women Poets*, edited by Alison Chapman (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2003), 181.



Figure 85 – Japanese Fan, 1876. Joseph Swain (1820- 1909). In *Cornhill Magazine*, 34 (1876): 378.

The multi-layered structure of the poem, with a story-within-the-story approach, might suggest that the listener identified with, and projected herself on, the Japanese woman so much to decide to follow her example in rejecting the seducer. This interpretation is further corroborated by the fact that later in the poem it is mentioned that even the Japanese woman held a fan, creating a point of contact between the two levels of this story. In this meta-narrative, the image of Japan is depicted as an unattainable fairyland in which “People spread a mat to rest on/ In mid air?” and you can see a woman who “[...] plants her foot on nothing/Does not fall,/ And in fact appears to heed it / Not at all.”¹⁰¹⁰ A comfortable fantasy that can offer temporary relief from the “stormy” outside world but, as any fairy-tale, it cannot last long and, at some point, it must end.

Veley’s interpretation of Japan was shared also in the North East. Veley’s poem was directly mentioned in a newspaper published in the County Durham¹⁰¹¹ and the *Cornhill Magazine* was accessible in local public libraries.¹⁰¹² Moreover, a local poet, Wilfrid Wilson Gibson (1878-

¹⁰¹⁰ Veley, “A Japanese Fan,” 380-381.

¹⁰¹¹ *Durham County Advertiser*, 8 September 1876, 6.

¹⁰¹² The issue of the *Cornhill Magazine* in question, in which the Veley’s poem “Japanese Fan” was published, was (and still is) held in the Literary and Philosophical Society.

1962), evoked the same enchanted atmosphere and fascination toward the stereotype of the Japanese woman in his poem *A Lyric of Japan* published in 1896.¹⁰¹³ As already discussed in the previous chapters, both North Eastern retailers and bazaar organisers adopted the same idealised vision of Japan to promote their respective commercial and philanthropic initiatives. Numbering among those who helped organise charity bazaars, wealthy ladies were more than happy to wear traditional Japanese costumes, echoing the same empathic link mentioned by Veley. Crouch and Veley's meditations on the ability of Japanese objects to transport their viewer away were probably familiar to many people in the North East, who found emotional comfort in handling a Japanese fan or creating an intimate domestic space with a Japanese screen in order to daydream about Japan as a temporary relief from mundane concerns.

Veley's "Japanese Fan" raises up two more important aspects that characterised the Japanese material culture consumption in the private sphere: the gender connotation, and the concept of Japanese "Otherness". With regard to the latter, it appears clear that in the North East, despite the strong commercial trade and the numerous direct encounters between people in the North East and Japan (its objects, trade or people), Japanese objects remained part of the exotic "Other" even in an eclectic arrangement. However, this does not imply that Japanese articles were marginalised, on the contrary, because of the high admiration that people felt toward Japanese aesthetics, they consciously incorporated exotic objects such as fans, ceramics, screens, in their domestic spaces that were supposed to represent their cosmopolitan individuality. As previously argued, Judith Neiswander relates this practice to the concept of cultural liberalism and the need for individuality in home decoration promoted by the authors of domestic advice manuals since the 1870s. Exotic goods played a crucial role in this process, allowing middle-class householders to express their individuality through eclectic displays.

The Victorian cosmopolitan interior influenced by liberal thoughts should be taken as a counterexample of the rigid notion of Orientalism coined by Said. As John MacKenzie has demonstrated, in different cultural forms such as visual arts and design, the role played by the East could not be portrayed exclusively as the victim, because "Oriental" design traditions were

¹⁰¹³ Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, "A Lyric of Japan," *The English Illustrated Magazine* 15 (1896): 385. Quoted in its entirety in Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 65-66.

genuinely admired and yearned by European consumers.¹⁰¹⁴ Following MacKenzie, John Potvin suggests that eclectic displays at home should be put in relation to the Homi Bhabha's concept of "third space," a hybrid environment of continuous negotiation between two or more cultures "beyond restrictive assumptions and cultural boundaries."¹⁰¹⁵ Potvin defines that:

Oriental interiors are the result of an ongoing, endless series of hybrid becomings, always in the process of taking *place*; they are the resulting flux of constant and ongoing tensions, negotiations, ebbs, flows, bursts, presences and absences.¹⁰¹⁶

The North East of England has been shown as an excellent case study to demonstrate these continuous negotiations between British and Japanese culture, but further clarification is needed. What Potvin does not take into consideration is the role that Japan itself played in how it was perceived within the Anglo-Japanese cultural exchange. More specifically, the encounter between the two cultures was filtered through transcultural phenomena such as the Japanese reinterpretation of European and American taste, which was realised in the manufacture and export of decorative objects specifically for the Western market.¹⁰¹⁷ As Dōshin Satō has observed, this approach by the Japanese resulted from the Meiji government's policies, which besides successfully strengthening domestic industry and replenishing the state coffers, influenced the Western perception of what was "authentically" Japanese,¹⁰¹⁸ thereby giving a degree of agency to Japan despite its uneven power relationship with Britain. Therefore, rather than just an ongoing hybrid between the British and Japanese cultural identity, the complexity of this transcultural exchange should be better understood as the constant dialogue between the British desire of cosmopolitanism and the Japanese reinterpretation of the Western fascination with Japan.

¹⁰¹⁴ John MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), xiv.

¹⁰¹⁵ John Potvin, "Inside Orientalism: Hybrid Spaces, Imaginary Landscapes and Modern Interior Design." *Oriental Interior: Design, Identity, Space*, edited by John Potvin (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 6.

¹⁰¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6-7.

¹⁰¹⁷ For example, in the early twentieth century, Japanese manufacturing companies such as Takashimaya or Mitsukoshi produced kimonos "specifically with the export market in mind, as opposed to in the late nineteenth century when it was largely indigenous kimonos that were imported into Britain, which reflected the tastes of Japanese kimono wearers rather than foreigners. The companies strategically responded to British demand by adapting kimonos for export in pale colours. British merchants selling these kimonos in Britain emphasized their Japanese or oriental origin through marketing." Akiko Savas, "Dilute to Taste: Kimonos for the British Market at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century," *International Journal of Fashion Studies* 4, no. 2 (2017): 177. The British notion of "Japaneseness" in relation to kimono is discussed in Elizabeth Kramer, "'Not so Japan-Easy': The British Reception of Japanese Dress in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Textile History* 44, no. 1 (2013): 3-24.

¹⁰¹⁸ Dōshin Satō, *Modern Japanese Art and the Meiji State: The Politics of Beauty* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), 117-119, 133-135.

In North Eastern interiors, this transcultural phenomenon resulted in a contact zone in which the image of Japan was perfectly integrated into Victorian domesticity, maintaining its exotic attractiveness. The international trade relationship between Japan and the North East played a crucial role in this matter, as epitomised by Lord Armstrong, but it cannot be forgotten that Japanese decorative objects were popular also in towns and villages which had no direct contact with “New” Japan. For them, most of the information arrived through newspapers and other publications which, especially from the 1890s, depicted Japan as a civilized country; at the same time, however, charity bazaars and other public events promoted the pre-modern image of Japan, creating an ambivalence which left space for exotic fascinations and feelings of escapism. Looking at how this ambiguity was addressed in the North East, it could be argued that Japanese decorative objects found their place in the eclectic and cosmopolitan interiors of the region raising no kind of anxieties, which implicitly questioned the dichotomy of “Self/Other.” As already discussed, even when a room was called “Japanese,” such as in the Coates’s house in Sunderland or at Craggside, there was no interest in arranging an authentic and accurate display, but it was just a way to associate that space with a more inclusive, cosmopolitan experience (Coates) or to underline a personal relationship (Craggside).

Taking into consideration the gender discourse, traditionally, Japanese and “Oriental” articles were traditionally displayed in the feminine spaces of the home such as parlours, drawing or sitting rooms, as well as in the most private environments of the house, the bedrooms.¹⁰¹⁹ This can be seen for instance in the case of Joseph A. D. Shipley (1822–1909),¹⁰²⁰ a Newcastle solicitor, the auction sale catalogue of his house furnishings lists a 38 cm tall Satsuma vase in the drawing room that might be the one positioned in the middle of the table in the photograph

¹⁰¹⁹ See, Craig Clunas, “Taste and Gender: Chinese Goods in Eighteenth-Century Britain,” *Dream of the Dragon: Visions of China and Japan* (Colchester: University of Essex, 1994), 13-17; Vanessa Alayrac-Fielding, “From the Curious to the ‘Artinatural’: The Meaning of Oriental Porcelain in 17th and 18th Century English Interiors,” *Miranda* 7, no. 1 (2012): 1-36.

¹⁰²⁰ Joseph A. D. Shipley (1822–1909) was born in Gateshead and he made his fortune as a partner at a firm of Newcastle solicitors. Shipley’s intention was to build a public gallery in Newcastle in which displaying his fine art collection and he left £30,000 to fund the construction of a gallery. However, the Newcastle Council declined Shipley’s gift, so the Gateshead Council agreed to construct the gallery. The Shipley Art Gallery opened to the public in 1917. His Japanese collection of decorative objects was sold by auction in 1909. Laia Anguix, “‘A Collection of Mere Travesties of Time-honoured Originals’: The Rejection of the Shipley Bequest,” *Journal of the History of Collections* 32, 3 (2020): 523–536.

attached to the catalogue (Figure 86).¹⁰²¹ It is difficult to say if the room arrangement in the picture represents Shipley's everyday display or it was contrived for the occasion of the photograph, however, the privileged position of the Satsuma vase reveals the interest of the householder/auctioneer in the cosmopolitan trend for Japanese art.



Figure 86 – Drawing Room, Saltwell Towers, Gateshead, 1909. In *Catalogue of Household Furnishing, Library, and other Effects belonging to the Estate of the Late J. A. D. Shipley, Esq.* L018.2/Cr016. Newcastle City Library.

All the other Japanese decorative objects in Shipley's house were located in the various bedrooms: a "fourfold Japanese screen with needlework panels,"¹⁰²² a "pair of Kaga [Kutani ware] vases," and a "set of six Sheraton chairs with loose seats upholstered in Japanese tapestry."¹⁰²³ Regarding the latter, it is important to further underline how, at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, Japanese objects were considered perfectly compatible with most of the traditional British styles such as the Sheraton, further demonstrating the domestication of Japan in late Victorian and Edwardian homes (Figure 87).

¹⁰²¹ *Catalogue of Household Furnishing, Library, and Other Effects Belonging to the Estate of the Late J. A. D. Shipley, Esq.* Newcastle, 1909, Newcastle City Library, L018.2/Cr016, Lot 109.

¹⁰²² *Ibid.*, Lot 454.

¹⁰²³ *Ibid.*, Lot 667.



Figure 87 – Sheraton chair with Japanese upholstery. In *Catalogue of Household Furnishing, Library, and other Effects belonging to the Estate of the Late J. A. D. Shipley, Esq.* L018.2/Cr016. Newcastle City Library. Detail.

Similar examples of Japanese objects in what were considered the feminine spaces of the Victorian home can be found also in countryside villages in the North East. In 1876, a “Japanese table” was documented in the parlour of the house owned by Miss Edington located in Felton, a rural centre in the south of Alnwick.¹⁰²⁴ The geographical location further demonstrates how widespread the Japan mania was in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

However, Japanese decorative objects were also displayed in what were traditionally regarded as masculine spaces such as the dining room. For example in Hutton Hall, Pease’s country

¹⁰²⁴ *Alnwick Mercury*, 8 July 1876, 4.

house, two Japanese mirrors and a Satsuma vase were displayed.¹⁰²⁵ In this regard, it is possible to argue that Joseph Whitwell Pease's wife, Mary Fox, had a prominent role in challenging the conventional reading of the masculine character of the dining room. Concerning the presence of East Asian ceramics in the late Victorian dining room, Anne Anderson suggests that it was a masculine act of reclaiming "Old Blue" out of the effeminate connotation with which it was more closely aligned.¹⁰²⁶ However, even if Joseph Whitwell Pease expressed his sympathy with Japan, his personal diary does not mention Japanese articles, while it offers a lot of information about his painting and sculpture collection.¹⁰²⁷ This might sound contradictory taking into consideration that the book collection of the house comprised a decorative manual focused exclusively on Japanese art and design, *A Grammar of Japanese Ornament and Design* (1880) by Thomas W. Cutler.¹⁰²⁸ Because of its illustrations, Cutler's volume was a considerably expensive book, costing £2 and 6 shillings: a luxury in comparison to the 2 shillings and 6 pence of a volume of the *Art at Home* series edited by Loftie.¹⁰²⁹ Purchasing such an expensive publication testifies to a sincere interest in Japanese art and design by the Peases, and if Joseph Whitwell was not directly involved in collecting and displaying Japanese decorative objects, it is more than possible that his wife, Mary Fox, played a prime role in this matter. For example, also in the drawing room, it is possible to identify two big Japanese fans hung on the sides of a great mirror (Figure 88).¹⁰³⁰ This does not mean that the husband was excluded from the decision-making process, on the contrary, as Deborah Cohen has suggested, "until at least the 1880s, the business of furnishing was almost entirely a man's world."¹⁰³¹ In the following decades, this strict paradigm started to be challenged by the professionalisation of female decorators and was totally subverted in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁰³² Therefore, Hutton Hall perfectly represents an early attempt to extend the feminine control over the dining room.

¹⁰²⁵ *Library, China, Paintings, etc. from Hutton Hall, recently occupied by the Sir Jos W. Pease, Bart, Vol. 1*, Middlesbrough, Teesside Archives, U/ZX/2/6, 1903, lott. 1372, 1376.

¹⁰²⁶ Anne Anderson, "Coming Out of the China Closet?: Performance, Identity and sexuality in the House Beautiful," *Oriental Interiors: Design, Identity, Space*, edited by John Potvin (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 141.

¹⁰²⁷ I am thankful to Margaretta Frederick for this information.

¹⁰²⁸ *Library, China, Paintings, etc. from Hutton Hall, recently occupied by the Sir Jos W. Pease, Bart, Vol. 2*, Middlesbrough, Middlesbrough, Teesside Archives, U/ZX/2/7, 1903, lot. 158.

¹⁰²⁹ Gere, *The House Beautiful*, 79-80.

¹⁰³⁰ *Library, China, Paintings, etc. from Hutton Hall, recently occupied by the Sir Jos W. Pease, Bart, Vol. 1*, Middlesbrough, Teesside Archives, U/ZX/2/6, 1903, lot. 428.

¹⁰³¹ Cohen, *Household Gods*, 90.

¹⁰³² Cohen, *Household Gods*, 105-121; Penny Spark, *As Long as It's Pink: The Sexual Politics of Taste* (London: Pandora, 1995), 8.



Figure 88 – Drawing Room, Hutton Hall, Guisborough, c.1897. In *Saltburn by the Sea and its Environs*. PR/EAT(2)/5/2. Teesside Archives, Middlesbrough.

Conclusion

In the late Victorian period, the Japan mania reached the North East with no apparent delay in comparison to the other British regions as a transcultural phenomenon, associated with exoticism and artistic excellence. Mediators and cultural mobilisers such as local retailers and the authors of decorative advice manuals emphasised the ways in which Japanese objects embodied particular cultural values that helped their diffusion and naturalised their presence in the Victorian home, a process that was characterised by three main elements. Firstly, retailers and advice manual authors underlined the compatibility of Japanese decorative art with British styles and the exoticism of Japanese objects was advocated in the arrangement of a cosmopolitan interior, following the popularity of the liberal thought. Secondly, Japanese decorative objects were highlighted as the best choice, in relation to their price, for those who wanted to create an artistic environment in their house. Thirdly, Japanese articles in the domestic environment were praised for their moral and didactic qualities mainly because of the idealised figure of the Japanese artist-workman. The excellent manufacturing attributes of the Japanese decorative objects made for export were then seen as the result of the virtuous morality

of its executors in contraposition to the British decorators. As a result, Japanese articles became a synonym of beauty and novelty to most of the Victorian consumers, not just the followers of the Aesthetic Movement, but also to conservative householders and clergymen interested in appropriately expressing their individuality.

In the North East of England, the widespread success of Japanese aesthetics among different social groups in both the urban environment and the countryside can be explained by borrowing the Kantian concept of “subjective universal” judgment, in which the perceived ambivalence associated with Japanese objects became the key factor of their popularity. From industrial magnates to local businessmen, from aristocratic families to clergymen, everyone chose Japanese decorative articles in order to express their individual taste and identity at home. Each of them, however, interpreted the consumption of Japanese material culture following their own specific preferences with one major distinction: middle-class members in the North East had the tendency to consider Japanese decorative objects as an inclusive, social “new luxury;” while to aristocratic consumers they remained an exclusive, elitist “old luxury.”

While in public the masculine “New” Japan (associated with international trade) never merged with the feminine “Old” Japan (associated with the Japan mania); in the private sphere this rigid dichotomy was blurred in the domestic environment, and the Japanese objects were displayed in both masculine and feminine spaces without anxiety. Therefore, Japanese articles can be considered a point of contact between what were considered two distinct gendered environments, as well as partly anticipating the total shift in British domesticity that occurred in the 1920s and 1930s, when women took full control of the decoration of the home.

Lastly, Japanese decorative objects became an important part of the late Victorian cosmopolitan interior, even if, as this chapter has demonstrated, the cultural dialogue was not between British and Japanese identity, but between the individual, the cosmopolitan aspiration of each householder and the transcultural phenomenon called Japan mania.

Conclusion

Introduction

This regional study has offered a detailed insight into the Anglo-Japanese cultural interaction that has not previously been possible through wider studies or focused studies on named artists, designers, and specific institutions. The analysis of a single British region such as the North East of England reveals that in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods global phenomena such as the exotic fascination with Japan as well as the interest in a more accurate representation of Japanese culture were not exclusive to metropolises and urban areas. In contrast to the past scholarship such as Marie Conte Helm's book, this thesis demonstrates that the relationship between the North East of England and Japan was not dominated by international trades such as shipbuilding and iron manufacturing, but it was rather the result of different types of encounters mediated through transcultural flows such as the popular concepts of "Old" and "New" Japan, giving rise to multiple and multifaceted contact zones throughout the region. Considering that in the North East these opposing interpretations of Japan occasionally occurred in the same physical or imaginary space, the interaction between British and Japanese culture resulted into an unresolved cultural dialogue that cannot be simplistically reduced to the Saidian dichotomy "East/West" and "Self/Other." Rather than mere examples of the British dominance over the generic East, each contact zone discussed in this thesis has demonstrated that the popular images of Japan were characterised by a certain degree of ambiguity which allowed the imperialistic narrative to be occasionally questioned by people in the North East. With this regard, a prominent role was played by the Japanese and Anglo-Japanese visual and material culture that reached both urban and rural areas in the region, becoming a transcultural vehicle for further meanings which simultaneously accorded with its regional identity and its cosmopolitan aspirations.

Chapters Summary

This ambiguity associated with the interpretation of Japanese culture appears clear since the early 1850s. The "distant reading" of local newspapers with regard to Japan from 1850 to 1913 has demonstrated that information about the Asian country collected from national sources reached the North East with no relevant delay, allowing local people to develop an interest in, as well as an ambivalent perception of, Japanese culture even before Japanese people paid the first visit to the region in 1862. After the restoration of the imperial power and the end of the Tokugawa regime in 1869, the Meiji government began to embrace a process of modernisation which further emphasised the dualism between the pre-modern and traditional "Old" Japan

against the industrialised and militaristic “New” Japan. Rather than giving rise to a conflict, the contraposition between these two contradictory “discursive formations”¹⁰³³ concerning Japan was easily defused in newspapers published in the North East because of the traditional organisation of these periodicals, as well as the “open” form which characterised them.¹⁰³⁴ Through local newspapers, this ambivalence associated with Japan was naturalised as an everyday discourse, becoming part of the popular representation of Japanese culture in the region. Forcing the world to reconsider the position of Japan as a new military power, the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) questioned some of these Victorian preconceptions about Japan by offering the opportunity to scrutinise some of the previously established metonyms of Japanese culture. Newspapers in the North East particularly addressed the new role of women in Japanese society, as well as the consumption of Japanese decorative objects in Britain, which was no longer acknowledged as an effective and comprehensive way to experience Japan. While still reinforcing the unequal power relationship between the dominant British Empire and subaltern Meiji Japan, these further layers of meaning gave alternatives to the exclusive depiction of the Asian Country as a passive, feminine, and dehistoricised culture or one that, because of Western intervention, had become “modern” by mimicking other nations such as Britain.

The same accepted ambiguity highlighted in newspapers published in the North East was further developed in Japan-themed public events organised in the region. From the 1850s professional lecturers not only offered a brief introduction to Japanese culture, but they also displayed in front of a curious and diverse audience Japanese items such as ethnographical specimens as well as visual aids including lantern slides and photographs, offering an alternative view of the Asian country in contrast to the pre-modern representation of Japan popularised through Japanese decorative objects, prints, and painting. The change of lens through which Japan was observed and experienced in the North East after the Sino-Japanese War was also exemplified in Japanese public exhibitions. In the 1860s and 1870s, Japanese objects were considered exotic and refined curiosities which did not need historical contextualisation to be appreciated. The alternative perception of Japanese culture and society after the Sino-Japanese War was reflected in the organisation of photographic exhibitions and

¹⁰³³ Stuart Hall, Introduction to *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publishing, 1997), 6.

¹⁰³⁴ Margaret Beetham, “Open and Closed: The Periodical as a Publishing Genre,” *Victorian Periodicals Review* 22, no. 3 (1989): 96-100.

film projections in which people in the North East of England were able to experience Japan from a revised perspective. In contrast, the Japanese content in acrobatic shows and theatrical plays was not subjected to change after the Sino-Japanese War, suggesting that the idealised image of Japanese culture persisted in popular circles and was largely tied to the consumption of Japanese decorative objects beyond the end of that conflict. This sense of dislocation, which Grace Lavery has defined as “queer realism,”¹⁰³⁵ not only led to the representation of Japan in entertainment spectacles being only partly affected by news reports of the start of the Japanese military campaign in East Asia, but it also strengthened in North Eastern people’s mind the reassuring and feminine perception of Japan symbolised by the archetypal image of a *geisha* in a kimono.

The ambiguous objectification of Japanese culture did not only pertain to entertaining spectacles, but also philanthropic events. In response to the heightened fascination with Japan in the 1880s, charity bazaars and fairs in the North East also started to be fitted up as a Japanese traditional village, acknowledging it as a “respectable” setting in which to organise philanthropic events. As a result, the same, stereotyped image of traditional Japan was experienced in both towns and villages throughout the region, reinforcing not only the idealised representation of Japanese culture – bonding it to the British fascination with the Asian country –, but also strengthening the separation between “Old” and “New” Japan, as the tendency was to avoid referencing the trade relationship between the North East and Japan. With regard to the practice of wearing Japanese costumes, this temporary appropriation of “Japaneseness” served simultaneously to further naturalise the stereotyped image of Japan within the local communities through the mediation of stallholders’ bodies,¹⁰³⁶ as well as enhance the public persona of the wearer¹⁰³⁷ through both the refined connotations attributed to Japanese artistic tradition and fashionability of the kimono.¹⁰³⁸

¹⁰³⁵ Grace Lavery, *Quaint, Exquisite. Victorian Aesthetics and the Idea of Japan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 37.

¹⁰³⁶ Christine Guth, “Charles Longfellow and Okakura Kakuzo: Cultural Cross-Dressing in the Colonial Context,” *positions* 8, no. 3 (2000): 607; David Bate, “The Occidental Tourist: Photography and the Colonizing Vision,” *Afterimage* 20, no. 1 (1992): 11-13.

¹⁰³⁷ Emma Ferry, “‘A Novelty among Exhibitions’: The Loan Exhibition of Women’s Industries, Bristol 1885,” *Women and the Making of Built Space in England, 1870-1950*, edited by Elizabeth Darling and Lesley Whitworth (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007) 54.

¹⁰³⁸ Elizabeth Kramer and Akiko Savas, “The Kimono Craze: From Exoticism to Fashionability,” in *Kimono: Kyoto to Catwalk*, edited by Anna Jackson (London: V&A Publishing, 2020), 181, 191.

The commodification of Japanese culture was even more evident with regard to retail of Japanese decorative objects in shops throughout the North East of England. In contrast to Aslin's periodisation, newspaper and archival research has revealed that Japanese textiles, fans, ceramics, screens, and lacquerware became common and affordable articles to purchase throughout the region from the mid-1870s. Therefore, almost everyone in the region had the chance to partake in the cultural phenomenon of Japan mania, which not only aligned the consumption of the Japanese objects in the North East to the other parts of Britain, Europe, and America, but it also naturalised in the region the idea of Japan as a transcultural model of aesthetic excellence within a cosmopolitan discourse about taste.¹⁰³⁹ The way Japanese articles were advertised in local newspapers reveals that the totality of retailers in the North East promoted Japanese goods by taking advantage of the quaint image of Japan, rather than its "modern" counterpart. In a similar manner to Japan-themed spectacles and philanthropic events, shops in the North East such as the Mikado Bazaar relied on the Victorian longing for escapism, providing to their clientele a multifaceted shopping experience which reinforced the exotic connotation of Japanese "Otherness" by arranging what local newspapers defined as a "veritable fairyland."

Turning to the private sphere, the analysis of Japanese objects' consumption in the North East has revealed that in the domestic environment the separation between "Old" and "New" Japan, in relation to dichotomies such as Self/Other was never as clear-cut as one might assume. With this regard, the mediating role of retailers as well as authors of domestic advice manuals was of primary importance in supporting the presence of Japanese decorative objects within the Victorian and Edwardian cosmopolitan interior,¹⁰⁴⁰ transforming Japanese art and design into a sociable and inclusive "new luxury," as Jan de Vries might call it.¹⁰⁴¹ Accordingly, the acquisition or collection of Japanese objects in the North East of England during the period under examination reflected a multi-layered narrative testifying to the plurality of context in which Japanese articles served as marks of refined taste, signs of status, and vehicles of meanings. Considering that most of these Japanese objects were manufactured in Japan with

¹⁰³⁹ Judith Neiswander, *The Cosmopolitan Interior: Liberalism and the British Home 1870-1914* (New Heaven: Yale University Press, 2008), 48.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Judith Neiswander, *The Cosmopolitan Interior*.

¹⁰⁴¹ Jan De Vries, "Luxury in the Dutch Golden Age in Theory and Practice," *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods*, edited by Maxine Berg and Elizabeth Eger (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 41-44.

European and American taste in mind,¹⁰⁴² rather than an example of Homi Bhabha's "third space" in which two different cultures hybridised,¹⁰⁴³ the resulting contact zone was characterised by a more complex relationship, namely the ongoing negotiation between the cosmopolitan desire felt by people in the North East and the Japanese reinterpretation of the Western fascination with Japan.

What Do These Transcultural Flows Reveal?

To answer the main research question – *what does the visual and material culture of the transcultural flows between Japan and the North East of England reveal about the sharing, interpretation and transformation of knowledge, design and cultural beliefs, practices or values between the British region and the Asian country?* –, this thesis demonstrates that in the late Victorian period the British interest in, and fascination with, Japan was not a prerogative of metropolises and national political centres; on the contrary, the popularity of Japanese culture in the North East of England was in line with the timing and content of the other parts of Britain. The latest news about Japan was published in regional papers with no relevant delay and, from the beginning, touring events such as public lectures and entertaining spectacles frequently stopped in the British region. In the 1880s, when the Victorian fascination with Japan became nationally ubiquitous, Japan-themed events and theatrical plays began to be organised in the North East, embracing the same "orientalised" representation of Japanese culture which contrasted with the country that at that time was undertaking a process of modernisation with success. In addition, this thesis argues for the first time that the transcultural encounters between Japan and the North East of England reveal further layers of complexity concerning the Anglo-Japanese relationship, which can be summarised in three main points, inextricably tied to each other.

First, this mediated understanding of Japan gave rise in the North East to an ambiguous representation of the country, which, despite its contradictory nature, was nonetheless perceived as formed by separate, but "authentic" polarities. Confirming what has been theorised by Stuart Hall – that discursive formations need to be considered "useful, relevant, and 'true'" to their contexts –¹⁰⁴⁴ the paradoxical coexistence of "New" and "Old" Japan was based upon the fact

¹⁰⁴² Dōshin Satō, *Modern Japanese Art and the Meiji State: The Politics of Beauty* (Los Angeles: Getty Research Institute, 2011), 117-119, 133-135.

¹⁰⁴³ John Potvin, "Inside Orientalism: Hybrid Spaces, Imaginary Landscapes and Modern Interior Design." *Oriental Interior: Design, Identity, Space*, edited by John Potvin (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 6.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Stuart Hall, Introduction to *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, edited by Stuart Hall (London: Sage Publishing, 1997), 6.

that each image of the Asian country was associated with a different sphere of Victorian culture, as this thesis has exemplified by exploring the way in which newspapers in the North East published information about Japan. While detailed and accurate information concerning the Japanese economic progress and social reforms were reported on a daily basis in regional newspapers; the same periodicals also published articles promoting - as equally “authentic” - the pre-modern representation of traditional Japan, which better tied to the Western concept of “tradition.”¹⁰⁴⁵ In addition, the perception of Japanese authenticity provided by professional decorators, who arranged Japan-themed fairs and charity bazaars as well as the scenery of theatrical plays, was felt necessary and instrumental to satisfy the late Victorian longing for an idealised “Orient” to which to travel.¹⁰⁴⁶ Retailers such as Alexander Corder also encouraged this escapist indulgence, arranging the Mikado Bazaar, which was supposed to transport his Sunderland clientele directly to the idealised and “veritable” Japan. The increasing affordability of Japanese decorative objects meant the privilege, once just of aristocratic families, to arrange space within the domestic environment in which experiencing such daydreaming activity became accessible also to members of the middle class. As a result, this accepted ambiguity in conjunction with the ubiquity of Japanese goods facilitated the domestication of Japan within everyday practices which involved both observing Japanese officials or naval students in the region reading as well as experiencing virtual travels as temporary escapes from the rigid norms of Victorian society.

Second, with regard to the diffusion to this phenomenon in the North East of England, a predominant role was played by cultural mobilisers. Editors in the North East, for example, selected material from national papers, journals, and books to be reprinted in regional newspapers, unifying the content of the debate regarding Japan to what was discussed in London and in other parts of the British Empire. This movement and exchange of ideas about the Asian country took place in the highly literal sense when it comes to the lecturers invited to the North East to speak. As these public talks were often part of national touring programmes, it is clear that figures such as Diosy designed their lectures with a national audience in mind. In a similar manner, entrepreneurs such as Tannaker developed an entertaining spectacle to be staged throughout Britain; while theatrical plays such as *The Mikado* (1885), *The Geisha* (1896) and *The Mousmè* (1911) became phenomena of global magnitude. By replicating the same

¹⁰⁴⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, “Introduction: Inventing Traditions,” *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.

¹⁰⁴⁶ Michael Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre 1850-1910* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1981).

decorative formula in the arrangement of Japan-themed charity bazaars and fairs, decorating firms called from other regions such as Womersley, or local professionals such as Carnegie, reinforced the representation of an idealised Japan in the North East of England that was widely held in the West. Altogether, these mobilisers ultimately promoted and supported the regional interest in, and fascination with, Japan.

Lastly, taking into consideration the plethora of everyday practices and activities in which Japanese visual and material culture was encountered in the North East of England during the period under examination, this study concludes that, while the unbalanced power relation between Japan and Britain was not subverted, the representation of Japanese culture in the British region through transcultural flows such as “Old” and “New” Japan simultaneously reinforced and questioned the dominant imperial discourse. As discussed by Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley, and Douglas Fordham, “the concept of empire belongs at the centre, rather than in the margins, of the history of British art.”¹⁰⁴⁷ However, by extending this concept to visual and material culture and different contact zones, it is possible to affirm that in the North East the objectification and commodification of Japan, its culture, and its people resulted in ambivalent outcomes which, while supporting British imperialism, would occasionally deconstruct the same dichotomies associated with the imperial narrative.

With regard to “New” Japan, the hierarchical “Self/Other” distinction – on which colonialism was based – was threatened by the “double vision” phenomenon within mimicry,¹⁰⁴⁸ related to the adoption of Western-style cloths by Japan during official oversea missions from the early 1870s. As underlined in newspapers published in the North East, the decision by the Japanese to abandon their indigenous costumes was welcomed as a sign of progress attesting the Japanese success in erasing their “exotic and pre-modern” connotation; however, it also questioned the clear hierarchical distinction between East and West with regards to the Japanese who started to be praised for appearing indistinguishable from British inhabitants. Rather than the adoption of a new economic strategy or other social reforms, it was the abandonment of traditional costumes to testify the historical change by the Japanese in the mind of people in the North East. In other words, the absence of what people considered a pre-modern characteristic of Japanese culture corroborated the presence of Japan at the same table with other Western Powers. In addition to defining the behaviour by Japanese as a passive form of Westernisation, the use of

¹⁰⁴⁷ Tim Barringer, Geoff Quilley, and Douglas Fordham, introduction in *Art and the British Empire* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007), 3.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 126.

concepts related to “New” Japan in the North East implicitly reassessed the position of the Asian country on the world stage, reducing the dichotomy “Self/Other” to a more nuanced discourse.

Concerning the idealised and pre-modern “Old” Japan, while MacKenzie has emphasised how the popularity of this representation of the Asian country provided an alternative aesthetic to the Western canon around which Europeans and Americans “could group,”¹⁰⁴⁹ this regional study has demonstrated that the British fascination with Japan was not praised exclusively for its exoticism. Facilitated by the objectification of Japanese culture and “decorative orientalism,”¹⁰⁵⁰ the popularity of Japanese fans, screens, ceramics, textiles, prints, lacquerware and other decorative objects corroborated the idea that Japanese art and design could be considered synonymous with aesthetic excellence and could communicate not only cosmopolitanism, but also a refined and “moral” taste.¹⁰⁵¹ Such characteristics functioned as an effective vehicle to naturalise the presence of Japanese decorative objects even in conservative British houses owned by clergymen, becoming a positive, powerful and “respectable” metonym of Japanese culture in the North East and in the other parts of Britain.

Japan and the Cultural Identity in the North East of England

To provide an answer to a secondary research question – *what is the value of the focused study of the visual and material culture of this transcultural interaction and how does it relate to the cultural identity of the North East of England?* – this study identifies that during the period under examination the Anglo-Japanese relation in the North East of England had multiple impacts over the regional identity especially from a *translocal* perspective.¹⁰⁵² Being part of a global cultural phenomenon, when the fascination with Japan began to be shared among North East people in both urban and rural environments, the local identities took under consideration the *translocal* and “outward-looking” sense of the region. As theorised by Doreen Massey, the “global sense of space” involves the idea that “each place is the focus of a distinct mixture of

¹⁰⁴⁹ John MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 124.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Josephine Lee, “American Decorative Orientalism from the 19th into the 20th Century,” *Orientalism at the Turn into the Twentieth Century: Cultural Representations and Glocal Studies*, edited by Kenji Kitayama, Makoto Kinoshita and Yuko Matsukawa (Tokyo: Seijo University Center for Glocal Studies, 2015), 18. See also, Christopher Bush, “The Ethnicity of Things in America’s Lacquered Age,” *Representations* 99, no. 1 (2007): 78-98

¹⁰⁵¹ Jane Converse Brown, “‘Fine Art and Fine People’ Japanese Taste in American Home, 1876-1916,” *Making the American Home: Middle-class Women & Domestic Material Culture, 1840-1940*, edited by Marilyn Ferris Motz and Pat Browne (Bowling Green: Popular Press, 1988), 123-124, 136.

¹⁰⁵² Jan Nederveen Pieterse, “Globalization as Hybridization,” *Global Modernities*, edited by Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Ronald Robertson (London: Sage, 1995), 60-61.

wider and more local social relation.”¹⁰⁵³ Accordingly, the popular interest in Japan represented an attempt to embrace such global phenomena which not only created an imaginary link between the British region and the East Asian country, but also a space in which provincial discourses encountered national and international trends. Loan exhibitions of Japanese art and curiosities lent from local collectors, Japan-themed events in aid of local institutions and religious congregations, and shop interiors arranged as vehicle of virtual travel are just a few examples of how the fascination with Japan played out globally and locally. In other words, such spaces were able to incorporate and naturalise a global phenomenon within a safe and familiar environment as well as provide a cosmopolitan connotation to each regional identity.

North East and Japan Now, and Further Research

Despite the important role played by the Anglo-Japanese relationship in the North East of England in both economic and cultural matters demonstrated in this thesis, this encounter struggled to become part of the main narrative with regard to regional history. As discussed by Marie Conte-Helm, the popular knowledge concerning the commercial link between industries in the North East and Japan as well as the local fascination with Japanese culture fell into oblivion in the mid-twentieth century mainly because of the Second World War.¹⁰⁵⁴

Excluding historians and other kinds of specialists, the historical relation between Japan and the North East remains unknown to most of the local people and Japanese visitors, despite it was presented again through occasional public events. Encouraged by the opening of the Nissan Motor Manufactories in Sunderland in 1986, for instance, an ambitious project was organised, involving different kinds of entertaining activities focused on Japanese art and culture.¹⁰⁵⁵ As part of this “Japanese Festival,” as it was called, all of the museums and galleries in the region collaborated to arrange an exhibition in which Japanese art from North East public collections was displayed.¹⁰⁵⁶ The commercial links between Japan and the North East were acknowledged but, as the festival was mainly addressed to facilitate a broader cultural understanding of Japan by the local communities, the emphasis of the exhibition was more focused on providing an introductory picture of the Japanese artistic traditions, rather than accounting the complexity associated with the transcultural relationship between the British region and the East Asian

¹⁰⁵³ Doreen Massey, “A Global Sense of Place,” *Studying Culture* (London: Edward Arnold, 1993), 240.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Marie Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England: From 1862 to the Present Day* (London: Athlone, 1989), 124-127.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Conte-Helm, *Japan and the North East of England*, 182-187.

¹⁰⁵⁶ *Japanese Art from North East Collections* (Sunderland: Sunderland Museum and Art Gallery, 1986).

country. Unfortunately, the publication of Conte-Helm's *Japan and the North East of England* in 1989 did not change this tendency in the following exhibitions.¹⁰⁵⁷

As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, in the second half of the 2010s some exhibitions attempted to rekindle an awareness of the longstanding relationship between Japan and the North East. However, these small initiatives focused on just a few of the many transcultural encounters occurred in the late Victorian and Edwardian period.¹⁰⁵⁸ In this regard, the original contribution to knowledge of this study also aims to represent a reliable source of information for future public events and exhibitions concerning the Anglo-Japanese interaction in the North East as well as in Britain.

In addition to providing answers to both research questions, this thesis has also identified aspects which deserve further research to be fully understood. Although the transcultural flows discussed in this study were not unidirectional, the breadth of archival, visual and material culture uncovered with regard to the reception of Japan in the North East of England from 1862 to 1913 has resulted in a focus on Anglo-Japanese culture flows in the British region. The project suggests that there is clear scope to analyse the impact of the North East in Meiji Japan beyond the commercial context. In addition, in order to emphasise the importance of regional studies as a source of more nuanced information about transcultural interactions, it was decided to privilege the data collection to newspapers and archives in the North East, avoiding any statistical comparison with other parts of Britain such as London or other countries. Taking into consideration the possibility to replicate and extend the methodologies employed in this study to other locations, it is undeniable the potential of further research of this kind with regard to topics related to the Anglo-Japanese cultural relationship.

Despite the presence of potential improvements, this study has demonstrated the validity of using the transcultural approach even in a field such as the regional studies, allowing to better understand how global cultural phenomena affected also the everyday life in peripheral Britain

¹⁰⁵⁷ *Mingei: The Living Tradition in Japanese Arts* (Sunderland: Sunderland Museum and Art Gallery, 1991); *Japan Revealed* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Laing Art Gallery, 2001); *Japanese Wave* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Laing Art Gallery, 2010).

¹⁰⁵⁸ While *Project Godie: Revealing a Forgotten Chapter of North East History* (2016-2017) was built upon the story of the baby son of two Japanese performers from the Tannaker's acrobatic troupe who was buried in a local cemetery in 1873; the Dorman Museum's exhibition *From Tokyo to the Tees* (2017) sheds light on the trade relationship between Middlesbrough and Japan.

through transcultural contact zones. The example of the North East suggests that the British fascination with Japan was strongly linked to the global concept of cultural mobility, however, it also resonated with the local identity as it simultaneously supported the cosmopolitan aspiration as well as the national and international prestige of the local community.

Appendices

A – Newspapers

Newspaper	Digitalised Issues	Percentage
Alnwick Mercury	1854-1867, 1869-1885, 1889, 1909, 1912	56,67%
The Berwick Advertiser	1862-1863, 1870-1871, 1873-1892, 1897	39,06%
Berwickshire News and General Advertiser	1870-1872, 1875-1879, 1881-1882, 1889, 1892	27,27%
Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough	1870-1913	100,00%
Darlington & Stockton Times, Ripon & Richmond Chronicle	1850-1854, 1856, 1858, 1863, 1877, 18880, 1889, 1894, 1896, 1911	21,88%
Durham Chronicle	1850-1855, 1857-1863, 1868	50,00%
Durham County Advertiser	1850-1870, 1872-1887, 1889-1910	92,19%
Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail	1878-1913	100,00%
Hexham Courant	1864, 1877, 1879, 1889, 1897	14,71%
Jarrow Express	1863-1913	100,00%
Morpeth Herald	1854-1896, 1898-1909, 1911-1913	96,67%
Newcastle Courant	1850-1874, 1877-1879, 1881-1885, 1887-1893, 1895-1896, 1898-1900	88,24%
Newcastle Daily Chronicle	1858-1861, 1863-1910, 1912-1913	96,43%
Newcastle Evening Chronicle	1885-1896, 1898-1910, 1912-1913	93,10%
Newcastle Weekly Chronicle	1855, 1862-1870, 1875-1896, 1899-1900	53,13%
Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury	1850-1857, 1859-1872	95,65%
Newcastle Journal	1850-1885, 1889, 1893, 1898, 1900, 1910-1911, 1913	67,19%
Northern Echo	1870, 1873-1897, 1899-1900	63,64%
Shields Daily Gazette	1855-1897, 1899, 1904, 1906, 1910-1911	88,14%
Shields Daily News	1864-1868, 1870, 1873-1877, 1879-1888, 1900-1913	90,00%
Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette	1873-1895, 1898-1904, 1908-1913	87,80%
Teesdale Mercury	1855-1870	100,00%
	TOTAL	72,08%

Note: The percentage of digitized numbers is calculated taking into consideration the period between 1850-1913 and the beginning – and eventually the end – of the publication of each newspaper.

Source: British Newspaper Archive, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/> (accessed 01/03/2021).

B – Public Lectures about Japan in the North East of England, 1852-1913

Year	Lecturer	City	Title	Source
1852	Downing, C. T.	Newcastle	Empire of Japan	Newcastle Courant, 24 December 1852, 5
1859	Blake, Barnett	Stockton on Tees	Japan and the Japanese	Durham Chronicle, 28 October 1859, 7.
1859	Darwent, Rev. W.	Barnard Castle	Japan	Teesdale Mercury, 6 April 1859, 4
1860	Hargraves, John G.	Durham	Our New Friends in Japan	Durham Chronicle, 27 April 1860, 5.
1861	MacGowan, J.	Newcastle	China and Japan	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 29 November 1861, 2; 30 November 1861, 3
1862	MacGowan, J.	Humshaugh	China and Japan	Newcastle Journal, 1 April 1862, 4
1862	MacGowan, J.	Durham	China and Japan	Durham County Advertiser, 18 April 1862, 8
1863	Dresser, Christopher	Newcastle	n/a	Newcastle Journal, 20 November 1863, 1; Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 26 November 1863, 2
1863	Hunter, John H.	Alnwick	Japan and the Japanese	Alnwick Mercury, 1 January 1864, 4
1863	William Nicholas	Newcastle	Japan and the Japanese	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 10 November 1863, 3
1866	Astia	Newcastle	Japanese Painting	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 29 March 1866, 2; 31 March 1866, 2
1876	Smith, Thomas Eustace	Cullercoats	n/a	Shields Daily Gazette, 12 October 1876, 3
1877	Thomas, Rev. D.	(n/a) Shields	Japan and the Japanese	Shields Daily Gazette, 17 March 1877, 1
1877	Dening, Rev. W.	Blyth	n/a	Blyth News, 23 June 1877, 3
1878	Tristram, Canon	Branxton	The Mission in Japan	Newcastle Courant, 1 November 1878, 5
1878	Atkinson, R. W.	Newcastle	The Progress of Science in Japan	Conte-Helm, 1989, 58-59; Newcastle Courant, 15 November 1878, 4
1883	Rea, Charles	Wooler	A Month in Japan	Newcastle Courant, 13 April 1883, 5
1884	Angus, W. M.	Darlington	The Physical Features of Japan	Northern Echo, 19 February 1884, 4
1889	Russell, Rev J. M.	Simonburn	Japan and the Japanese	Hexham Courant, 26 October 1889, 5
1892	Lindsay, Rev. T.	Newcastle	The Great Britain of the East	Newcastle Courant, 12 November 1892, 3
1894	Lindsay, Rev. T.	North Shields	The Great Britain of the East	Shields Daily News, 3 December 1894, 2
1895	Lindsay, Rev. T.	Newcastle	The Great Britain of the East	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 22 January 1895, 2
1895	Lindsay, Rev. T.	Blyth	Japan	Morpeth Herald, 18 April 1896, 3
1894	Tristram, Miss K.	Durham	Japan	Durham County Advertiser, 30 March 1894, 5
1895	Brearley, D. S.	North Shields	Japan and the Japanese	Shields Daily News, 7 March 1895, 3
1895	Brearley, D. S.	Newcastle	Japan and the Japanese	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 7 March 1895, 6; Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 9 March 1895, 4

Year	Lecturer	City	Title	Source
1895	Brearley, D. S.	Sunderland	Japan and the Japanese	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 14 March 1895
1895	Brearley, D. S.	Middlesbrough	Japan and the Japanese	Northern Echo, 15 March 1895, 3
1895	Young, Capt. J. G.	Amble	Japan, the Island Empire of the Orient	Morpeth Herald, 2 April 1904, 5
1895	Tristram, Miss K.	Haughton-le-Skerne	Missions in Japan	Northern Echo, 30 March 1895, 4
1895	Brearley, D. S.	South Shields	Japan and the Japanese	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 24 October 1895, 3
1896	Villiers, Frederic	Newcastle	Japan under arms	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 17 February 1896, 8; Newcastle Courant, 22 February 1896, 4
1896	Villiers, Frederic	Stockton on Tees	Japan under arms	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 21 March 1896, 4
1896	Watson, Ralph	Hartlepool	Japan, its cities and its people	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 29 February 1896, 8
1896	Diosy, Arthur	Tynemouth	Japan, with Special Reference to the Recent War	Shields Daily News, 17 March 1896, 3
1896	Diosy, Arthur	Durham	Japan, with Special Reference to the Recent War	Durham County Advertiser, 13 March 1896, 5
1896	Diosy, Arthur	South Shields	Japan, with Special Reference to the Recent War	Shields Daily Gazette, 14 March 1896, 3
1896	Diosy, Arthur	Newcastle	Japan, with Special Reference to the Recent War	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 20 March 1896, 3
1896	Wilkins, Rev. W. J.	Darlington	Christian Work in Japan	Northern Echo, 14 January 1896, 1
1896	Wilkins, Rev. W. J.	South Shields	Christian Work in Japan	Shields Daily Gazette, 19 March 1896, 1
1896	Wilkins, Rev. W. J.	North Shields	Christian Work in Japan	Shields Daily News, 13 April 1896, 2
1896	Prout, Rev.	Jarrow	Japan and the Japanese	Jarrow Express, 3 April 1896, 3
1896	n/a	Middlesbrough	The England of the East, Japan	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 20 November 1896, 3
1897	Wright, Col.	West Hartlepool	Japan, its manners, creeds, and customs	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 22 February 1898, 2
1897	Weston, Rev. Walter	Newcastle	Travel and Exploration in Unfamiliar Japan	Conte-Helm, 1989, 74
1898	Wardroper, Rev. A. S.	Walker	Japan and the Japanese	Jarrow Express, 18 February 1898, 8
1898	Nakada, Rev. Juji	Sunderland	How I Received the Blessing of Full Salvation	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 16 June 1898, 2
1898	Nakada, Rev. Juji	North Shields	How I Received the Blessing of Full Salvation	Shields Daily News, 17 June 1898, 2
1899	Lindsay, Rev. T.	Jarrow	The Great Britain of the East	Jarrow Express, 24 November 1899, 8
1900	Diosy, Arthur	Newcastle	Our Friends of the East	Newcastle Weekly Chronicle, 20 January 1900, 3
1900	Vick, Rev. R. W.	Thornaby	Japan and its people	Northern Echo, 28 March 1900, 3

Year	Lecturer	City	Title	Source
1900	Cowell, Thomas	(n/a) Shields	Japan	Shields Daily News, 15 November 1900, 3
1900	Heron, Crawford	North Shields	The Real Japan	Shields Daily News, 4 December 1900, 3
1900	Eden, Sir. William	Richmond	Japan	Northern Echo, 20 December 1900, 4
1901	Fillingham, Rev. R. C.	Berwick	Japan	Berwickshire News and General Advertiser, 26 February 1901, 3
1901	Hannan, Ian C.	West Hartlepool	Japan	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 12 November 1901, 2
1901	Bailey, J.	Corbridge	The Customs of China and Japan	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 10 December 1901, 3
1901	Wright, L. and Patterson, James	(n/a) Shields	Japan and the Japanese	Shields Daily News, 12 December 1901, 3
1901	Bell, Gertrude	Middlesbrough	n/a	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 28 December 1901, 2
1902	Travers, Lindon	Newcastle	Japan and the Japanese	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 24 February 1902, 3
1902	Diosy, Arthur	Sunderland	Japan and our allies in the far East	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 21 March 1902, 3
1902	Diosy, Arthur	Middlesbrough	Japan and our allies in the far East	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 1 October 1902, 3
1904	Foxall, Father	Gateshead	Japan and the Japanese	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 15 March 1904, 5
1904	Owen, Benjamin	Newcastle	Japan and the Far East	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 23 March 1904, 5
1904	Brearily, D. S.	South Shields	Japan and the Japanese	Shields Daily Gazette, 18 October 1895, 1
1904	Nicholson, Rev. R.	North Shields	Japan	Shields Daily Gazette, 29 October 1904, 1
1904	Roberson, J. M.	South Shields	Labour in relation to War	Shields Daily Gazette, 26 October 1904, 4
1904	Diosy, Arthur	Newcastle	Russian and Japan: the causes, the progress, and the possible outcomes of the present conflict	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 1 October 1904, 7
1904	Owen, Benjamin	Monkseaton	Japan at peace and at war	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 30 November 1904, 6
1905	MacGregor, J. M.	Morpeth	Japan and its people, Russo-Japan war	Morpeth Herald, 23 December 1905, 7
1905	Owen, Benjamin	Morpeth	Japan at peace and at war	Morpeth Herald, 21 January 1905, 5
1905	Villiers, Frederic	Gateshead	What I saw of the fighting between Russia and Japan	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 29 September 1905, 1
1905	Kirton, Walter	Jarrow	Japan	Jarrow Express, 20 October 1905, 6
1905	Hobson, Rev. J.	Durham	Lecture on Japan	Durham County Advertiser, 3 November 1905, 5
1906	Weston, Rev. Walter	Newcastle	Japan	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 30 January 1906, 6
1906	Wright, Lawrence	Alnwick	Japan	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 29 May 1906, 6
1906	Travers, Lindon	Tynemouth	Pictures and Stories of Japan	Shields Daily News, 20 November 1906, 3

Year	Lecturer	City	Title	Source
1906	Hobson, Rev. J.	Yarm	Asia for God: Japan's Noble Battle Cry	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 15 December 1906, 3
1907	Chappell, Rev. A. F.	Brotton	Missionary work in Japan	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 22 March 1907, 8
1908	Hobson, Rev. J. R.	Middlesbrough	Asia for God: Japan's Noble Battle Cry	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 23 January 1908, 5
1908	Bullard, Col. Henry	Wingate	Japan	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 2 March 1908, 6
1908	Bainbridge, T. L.	North Shields	A Trip Through Japan	Shields Daily News, 3 October 1908, 2; Shields Daily News, 13 October 1908, 2
1908	Binyon, Laurence	Newcastle	Japanese Prints	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 29 September 1908, 7
1908	Peacocke, Mr.	Berwick	Japan	The Berwick Advertiser, 11 December 1908, 5
1909	Raphael, Mrs.	Tynemouth	Lafcadio Hearn, The Soul of Japan	Shields Daily News, 9 January 1909, 2
1909	McKenzie, F. A.	Blyth	Campaigning with Kuroki	Morpeth Herald, 16 January 1909, 6
1909	Marrs, Rev. A. J.	North Shields	Japan	Shields Daily News, 26 November 1909, 3
1909	Marrs, Rev. A. J.	Morpeth	Japan	Morpeth Herald, 4 December 1909,
1910	Foxwell, Prof. Ernest	Sunderland	Japan	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 12 September 1910, 2.
1910	Foxwell, Prof. Ernest	Middlesbrough	Japan	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 19 October 1910, 6
1910	Parrott, J. (F.R.M.S.)	Stockton on Tees	Japan and the Japanese - British Exhibition	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 30 September 1910, 2
1912	Bainbridge, Lindsay	Morpeth	A Tour through Japan	Morpeth Herald, 19 January 1912, 8, 10

C – Public Exhibitions of Japanese Objects in the North East of England, 1865-1913

Year	Town	Location	Title	Object(s)	Source
1865	Newcastle	Literary and Philosophical Society	Conversazione	"Apparel and Ornaments from China and Japan"	Newcastle Courant, 22 December 1865, 2
1869	Jarrow	Mechanics' Institute	Art and Industrial Exhibition	"Japanese curiosities [...] Japanese vases and curiosities"	Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury, 2 October 1869, 5
1869	Alnwick	Mechanics' Institute	Grand Conversazione Exhibition	"Japan fans [...], Japanese pottery, weapons, books"	Newcastle Journal, 4 November 1869, 3; Alnwick Mercury, 6 November 1869, 4
1874	Alnwick	Scientific and Mechanical institution	Grand Conversazione Exhibition	"Japanese curiosities"	Alnwick Mercury, 31 October 1874, 1
1882	Alnwick	Corn Exchange	Polytechnic Exhibition	"Collection of Chinese and Japanese art"	Newcastle Courant, 24 November 1882, 2
1884	Redcar	Central Hall	Coversazione	"Japanese and Chinese curiosities"	Northern Echo, 9 February 1884, 4
1884	Blyth	Mechanics' Building	Fine Art Exhibition	"Japanese vases"	Morpeth Herald, 7 June 1884, 2
1887	Sunderland	n/a	Jubilee Exhibition	"Japanese articles"	Newcastle Courant, 1 April 1887, 5
1888	Alnwick	n/a	War Relics Exhibition	"Japanese swords"	Newcastle Courant, 6 January 1888, 2
1888	Morpeth	Town Hall	Grand Art Loan Exhibition	"Japanese vases, pipe, cabinet, bronze"	Morpeth Herald, 26 May 1888, 3
1889	Newcastle	Central Exchange Art Gallery	Loan Exhibition of the Works of Local Artists	"Japanese pottery, bronzes, weapon, ivory"	Newcastle Courant, 14 September 1889, 4
1894	Sunderland	Victoria Hall	War in the Far East	Photographs	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 17 September 1894, 2
1895	Throston	Methodist Free Church	Japan and the Japanese	Limelight exhibition	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 18 February 1895, 2
1905	North Shields	Howard Hall	Living Japan	Film	Shields Daily News, 30 November 1905, 2
1906	Throckley	Co-Operative Hall	Scenes of Japan	Film	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 24 December 1906, 11
1909	Jarrow	Gem Picture Hall	Visiting Japan	Film	Jarrow Express, 8 April 1910, 8
1909	Tynemouth	Tynemouth Palace	Tourn in Japan	Film	Shields Daily News, 6 September 1909, 1
1910	Sunderland	Art Gallery	Japanese Exhibition	"Japanese student's works and photographs of school in Japan"	Newcastle Journal, 12 August 1910, 6
1910	Sunderland	Art Gallery	A Japanese Picture Book	Japanese prints and Protographs of Japan	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 29 November 1910, 6

Year	Town	Location	Title	Object(s)	Source
1911	Hartlepool	Palace Theatre	Nara, Japan	Film	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 20 June 1911, 3
1911	Sunderland	Coronation Hall	New Year's Day in Japan	Film	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 19 September 1911, 5
1913	Newcastle	Laing Art Gallery	Japanese Art	Japanese Prints, Ceramics, Ivories, Bronzes, Textiles, Weapons	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 18 November 1913, 8

D – Acrobatic and Dancing Spectacles with Native or non-Native Japanese-performers in the North East of England, 1865-1912

Year	Town	Location	Name of the Troupe	Native	Source
1865	Newcastle	Oxford Music Hall	Brothers Nemo	No	Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury, 16 September 1865, 1
1866	Newcastle	Tyne Concert Hall	Brothers Bali	No	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 19 February 1866, 1
1867	Newcastle	Music Hall	Great Dragon Troupe	Yes	Newcastle Journal, 3 October 1867, 2
1867	Newcastle	Town Hall	Lizzie Anderson	No	Newcastle Journal, 14 December 1867, 2
1869	Sunderland	Athenaeum	Royal Tycoon Troupe	Yes	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 2 March 1869, 1
1870	Barnard Castle	Music Hall	Japanese Performers	Yes	Teesdale Mercury, 16 February 1870, 4
1870	Tynemouth	Assembly Room	Japanese performers	Yes	Shields Daily News, 24 February 1870, 2
1870	North Shields	Albion Assembly Room	Japanese Performers	Yes	Shields Daily Gazette, 2 March 1870, 1
1870	Newcastle	Town Hall	Tycoon Japanese Dragon Troupe	Yes	Newcastle Journal, 4 March 1870, 2
1870	Alnwick	Corn Exchange	Japanese Performers	Yes	Alnwick Mercury, 5 March 1870, 1
1870	Berwick on Tweed	Corn Exchange	Royal Tycoon	Yes	Illustrated Berwick Journal, 11 March 1870, 5
1870	Sunderland	Theatre Royal	Tycoon Japanese Dragon Troupe	Yes	Shields Daily Gazette - Friday 23 December 1870, 1
1872	Durham	New Town Hall	Japanese Troupe	Yes	Durham County Advertiser, 15 March 1872, 1
1872	Middlesbrough	New Cleveland Hall	Tannaker Troupe (?)	Yes	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 19 April 1872, 1
1872	Newcastle	n/a	Japanese Juggler in Newsome's Circus	n/a	Newcastle Courant, 5 April 1872, 1
1872	West Hartlepool	New Gaiety Theatre	Dragon Troupe	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 26 April 1872, 8
1873	Sunderland	Victoria Hall	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Conte-Helm, 1989, 67
1874	Alnwick	Corn Exchange	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Alnwick Mercury, 14 March 1874, 1; 21 March 1874, 4
1875	Darlington	Central Hall	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Northern Echo, 4 January 1875, 1
1877	Darlington	Central Hall	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Northern Echo, 5 May 1877, 1
1877	Sunderland	Theatre Royal	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 25 May 1877, 5
1877	Middlesbrough	Central Temperance Hall	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Northern Echo, 31 May 1877, 1
1877	Newcastle	Town hall	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 13 July 1877, 5
1877	South Shields	Free Library Hall	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Shields Daily Gazette, 21 July 1877, 1
1877	Jarrow	Mechanics' Hall	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Jarrow Express, 4 August 1877, 3
1882	Sunderland	Wear Music Hall	Carlo Bianchi	No	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 14 November 1882, 1

Year	Town	Location	Name of the Troupe	Native	Source
1883	Sunderland	Victoria Hall	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 15 May 1883, 1
1883	West Hartlepool	Athenaeum	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 21 May 1883, 1
1883	Darlington	Central Hall	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Northern Echo, 22 June 1883, 1
1883	Bishop Auckland	n/a	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Northern Echo, 27 June 1883, 1
1883	Alnwick	Corn Exchange	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Alnwick Mercury, 7 July 1883, 1
1883	Jarrow	Mechanics' Hall	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Shields Daily Gazette, 7 July 1883, 1
1883	South Shields	Free Library Hall	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Shields Daily News, 12 July 1883, 3
1883	Berwick on Tweed	Queen's Room	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	The Berwick Advertiser, 13 July 1883, 1
1883	Sunderland	Avenue Theatre	Prof. Nimrod	No	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 31 December 1883, 1
1888	Sunderland	Avenue Theatre	Tannaker Troupe	Yes	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 23 July 1888, 1
1888	Sunderland	Thornton's Royal Variety Theatre	Royal Tycoon	Yes	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 14 November 1888, 1
1889	Newcastle	Theatre Royal	Mitsuta Troupe	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 12 January 1889, 1
1890	Middlesbrough	Prince of Wales Theatre	Tycoon Japanese Troupe	Yes	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 29 November 1890, 1
1891	West Hartlepool	Alhambra Variety Theatre	Avrigny	n/a	Northern Echo, 10 March 1891, 1
1891	West Hartlepool	Alhambra Variety Theatre	Zanetto	No	Northern Echo, 9 April 1891, 1
1891	West Hartlepool	Alhambra Variety Theatre	Royal Tycoon Japanese Troupe	Yes	Northern Echo, 23 May 1891, 1
1891	Darlington	n/a	Japanese Jugglers in Bostock and Wombwell Circus	n/a	Northern Echo, 26 October 1891, 1
1891	Stockton on Tees	n/a	Japanese Jugglers in Bostock and Wombwell Circus	n/a	Northern Echo, 26 October 1891, 1
1891	Middlesbrough	n/a	Japanese Jugglers in Bostock and Wombwell Circus	n/a	Northern Echo, 26 October 1891, 1
1892	Stockton on Tees	Grand Variety and Opera House	Zanetto	No	Northern Echo, 17 December 1892, 1
1894	Shildon	n/a	Japanese Sword Walkers	n/a	Northern Echo, 8 August 1894, 1
1900	Gateshead	Queen's Varieties	Ando Yedo Japanese Troupe	Yes	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 1 December 1900, 1
1901	North Shields	Circus and Novelty Hippodrome	Ando Yedo Japanese Troupe	Yes	Shields Daily News, 5 September 1901, 1
1902	Sunderland	People's Palace	Okabe (O'Kabe) family	Yes	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 18 February 1902, 1

Year	Town	Location	Name of the Troupe	Native	Source
1902	Sunderland	Olympia Carnival	Kametaros	n/a	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 18 December 1902, 1
1903	Sunderland	Olympia Carnival	Balzens and Pei-Ho	n/a	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 24 March 1903, 5
1903	South Shields	Royal Assembly Hall	Japanese Entertainers in Algie's Circus	n/a	Jarrow Express, 25 September 1903, 8
1904	Gateshead	Queen's Varieties	Royal Tokio Troupe	Yes	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 1 June 1904, 1
1905	Newcastle	Pavilion	Yamamoto and Koyoshi	Yes	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 13 May 1905, 5
1906	North Shields	Central Palace of Varieties	Akimoto Royal Yedo Japanese Troupe	Yes	Shields Daily News, 28 August 1906, 1
1907	South Shields	New Empire Palace	Prince Kokin	n/a	Shields Daily News, 2 January 1907, 2
1907	South Shields	Empire Palace	Otora San and Lukushima	Yes	Shields Daily News, 21 May 1907, 3
1909	North Shields	Empire Palace	Otora San and Lukushima	Yes	Shields Daily Gazette, 6 January 1910, 1
1909	Tynemouth	Tynemouth Palace	Riogoku Family	Yes	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 16 July 1909, 1
1909	Sunderland	Empire	Otora San and Lukushima	Yes	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 28 December 1909, 11
1911	West Hartlepool	Empire	Riogoku Family	Yes	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 4 March 1911, 1
1912	Sunderland	Avenue Theatre	Royal Andos Troupe	Yes	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 30 January 1912, 2
1912	Hartlepool	Palace Theatre	Kioto	Yes	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 2 March 1912, 3
1912	Sunderland	Picture Palace	Yetmahs	n/a	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 20 April 1912, 1
1912	Stockton on Tees	Hippodrome	Fuji Family	Yes	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 11 June 1912, 3
1912	North Seaton	Hippodrome	Morimura	Yes	Morpeth Herald, 12 July 1912, 9

E – Theatrical Plays with Japanese Elements Staged in the North East of England, 1871-1913

Year	Town	Location	Title	Source
1871	Newcastle	Oxford Music Hall	Splendora	Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury, 18 February 1871, 6
1885	Newcastle	Theatre Royal	The Mikado	Newcastle Weekly Chronicle, 17 October 1885, 12
1886	West Hartlepool	Theatre Royal	The Mikado	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 20 May 1886, 1
1886	Sunderland	Avenue Theatre	The Mikado	Conte-Helm, 1989, 66
1888	Sunderland	Avenue Theatre	The Mikado	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 5 March 1888, 1
1889	Stockton on Tees	Theatre Royal	The Mikado	Northern Echo, 11 May 1889, 1
1890	Middlesbrough	Theatre Royal	The Mikado	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 25 February 1890, 3
1896	South Shields	Thornton's Theatre	China and Japan	Shields Daily News, 14 April 1896, 3
1896	Darlington	Theatre Royal	The Geisha	Northern Echo, 13 October 1896, 1
1896	Newcastle	Theatre Royal	The Geisha	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 20 October 1896, 3
1896	Stockton on Tees	Theatre Royal	The Geisha	Northern Echo, 20 October 1896, 4
1896	Middlesbrough	Theatre Royal	The Geisha	Northern Echo, 30 October 1896, 3
1899	Stockton on Tees	Theatre Royal	The Geisha	Northern Echo, 20 October 1899, 1
1900	Great Lumley	Boys School	The Mikado	Durham County Advertiser, 2 March 1900, 5
1902	Newcastle	Empire	A Trip to Japan	Durham County Advertiser, 2 March 1900, 5
1904	South Shields	New Empire Palace	The Geisha	Shields Daily News, 22 March 1904, 2
1904	Newcastle	Grand Theatre	The Girl from Japan	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 16 April 1904, 1
1904	South Shields	Theatre Royal	The Girl from Japan	Shields Daily News, 29 April 1904, 2
1904	Newcastle	Tyne Theatre	The Darling of the Gods, A Drama of Japan	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 22 October 1904, 8
1904	Newcastle	St. George's Parochial Hall	A Corner in Japan	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 3 December 1904, 9
1907	Hartlepool	Empress Theatre of Variety	A Night in Japan	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 16 May 1907, 1
1909	Hamsteels	Drill Hall	Sunrise Land	Durham County Advertiser, 12 February 1909, 5
1909	Sunderland	Empire	A Vision of Japan	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 13 February 1909, 3
1909	Sunderland	Empire	A Night in Japan	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 5 April 1909, 1
1909	Stockton on Tees	Hippodrome	A Night in Japan	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 5 April 1909, 1
1909	Newcastle	Tyne Theatre	The Mikado	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 10 April 1909, 8
1909	Newcastle	Empire	Cockney in Japan	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 2 September 1909, 1

Year	Town	Location	Title	Source
1910	Durham	Assembly Rooms	The Mikado	Durham County Advertiser, 27 May 1910, 5
1911	Hartlepool	Kinemacolor	A Night in Japan	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 22 July 1911, 1
1912	Blyth	Theatre Royal	The Girl from Japan	Blyth News, 2 January 1912, 2
1912	Newcastle	Tyne Theatre	Mousme	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 17 February 1912, 7

F – Charity Bazaars and Fairs in which Japanese Objects were Displayed in the North East of England, 1867-1813

Year	City	Name	Charity	Source
1867	Sunderland	Grand Bazaar	Yes	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 25 April 1897, 4
1868	Morpeth	Bazaar	Yes	Newcastle Journal, 30 July 1868, 2
1869	Newcastle	Bazaar	Yes	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 1 April 1869, 3
1871	Cramlington	Polytechnic Exhibition and Bazaar	Yes	Morpeth Herald, 15 April 1871, 2
1878	Newcastle	Japanese Fete	No	Newcastle Courant, 1 May 1878, 5; 14 June 1878, 2
1878	Darlington	St. Cuthbert's Bazaar	Yes	Northern Echo, 15 October 1878, 3-4
1879	Sunderland	Japanese Fair	No	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 7 April 1879, 1
1879	Durham	Church Missionary Bazaar	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 30 May 1879, 4
1879	Barnard Castle	Bazaar	Yes	Northern Echo, 27 August 1879, 3
1880	Castle Eden	Bazaar	Yes	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 14 September 1880, 3
1882	Darlington	Japanese Bazaar	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 27 October 1882, 5
1882	Durham	Bazaar	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 15 December 1882, 5
1884	Durham	Japanese Fancy Fair and Feast of Lantern	Yes	Durham County Advertiser, 30 May 1884, 8
1884	Hexham	Japanese Village and Feast of Lanterns	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 6 June 1884, 5
1884	Darlington	Hospital Bazaar and Fancy Fair	Yes	Northern Echo, 22 October 1884, 4
1884	Newcastle	Bagdad Bazaar	No	Newcastle Journal, 25 November 1884, 3
1885	Durham	Church Missionary Bazaar	Yes	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 10 June 1885, 3
1885	Berwick	Japanese Fair	Yes	Berwick Advertiser, 31 July 1885, 4
1885	Sunderland	Annual Sale of Work	Yes	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 29 October 1885, 2
1885	Newcastle	Grand Bazaar and Exhibition	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 6 November 1885, 2
1885	Sunderland	Christmas Show of Japanese Goods	Yes	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 23 December 1885, 4
1886	Newcastle	Japanese Village Fair	No	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 18 January 1886, 8; Conte-Helm, p.67
1886	Alnwick	Japanese Fair	Yes	Durham County Advertiser, 28 May 1886, 3
1887	Newcastle	Japanese House	No	Northern Echo, 27 May 1887, 1
1887	Sunderland	Egyptian Fair and Bazaar	Yes	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 28 March 1887, 2
1887	Tynemouth	Japanese Village	No	Shields Daily Gazette, 9 April 1887, 4
1887	Seaham	Japanese Fair	Yes	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 3 May 1887, 3
1887	Tynemouth	Japanese Fair	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 24 June 1887, 5
1887	Darlington	Mikado Festival and Feast of Lanterns	Yes	Northern Echo, 20 October 1887, 8

Year	City	Name	Charity	Source
1887	Gateshead	Grand Bazaar and Japanese Village Fair	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 25 November 1887, 5
1887	Sunderland	Japanese Fair	Yes	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 15 December 1887, 4
1888	Stanhope	Japanese Village Fair	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 6 April 1888, 5
1888	Loftus	Japanese Bazaar	Yes	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 20 September 1888, 3
1888	Shildon/Old Shildon	Grand Bazaar and Japanese Village Fair	Yes	Northern Echo, 6 December 1888, 4
1888	Cullercoats	Winter Bazaar	Yes	Shields Daily News, 18 December 1888, 3
1889	Blyth	Annual Bazaar	Yes	Morpeth Herald, 5 January 1889, 2
1889	Willington Quay	Trade and Art Exhibition	Yes	Jarrow Express, 28 June 1889, 6
1889	Stanhope	Bazaar	Yes	Newcastle Journal, 23 August 1889, 6
1889	Middlesbrough	Grand Japanese Bazaar	Yes	Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough, 12 November 1889, 3
1890	Newcastle	Bazaar	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 1 November 1890, 8
1891	Ryton	Bazaar	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 26 September 1891, 3
1892	South Shields	Bazaar of All Nations	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 17 September 1892, 8
1892	Spennymoor	National School Bazaar	Yes	Newcastle Courant, 15 October 1892, 3
1894	Sunderland	Missionary Exhibition	Yes	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 7 March 1894, 2
1894	Sunderland	St. George Bazaar and World's Fair	Yes	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 9 October 1894, 2
1894	Newcastle	Missionary Exhibition	Yes	Shields Daily Gazette, 11 October 1894, 4
1895	Newcastle	Japan in Newcastle	Yes	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 9 December 1895, 4
1896	South Shields	Japanese Bazaar	Yes	Shields Daily News, 5 November 1896, 2; Shields Daily Gazette, 9 November 1896, 3
1898	North Shields	Bazaar and Cafe Chantant	Yes	Shields Daily News, 22 March 1898, 2
1898	Darlington	Mikado Festival Bazaar	Yes	Darlington Centre for Local Studies, Darlington. U418h56.
1899	Ashington	Catholic Bazaar	Yes	Morpeth Herald, 12 August 1899, 7
1899	Darlington	Japanese Fete	No	Northern Echo, 27 December 1899, 1
1902	Whitley Bay	Anglo-Japanese Festival and Fancy Bazaar	Yes	Newcastle Daily Chronicle, 9 December 1902, 5
1904	Willington Quay	Japan, Land of the Rising Sun	Yes	Morpeth Herald, 1 October 1904, 5
1904	South Shields	Japanese Bazaar	Yes	Newcastle Evening Chronicle, 26 October 1904, 6
1904	Sunderland	In Far Japan	Yes	Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette, 30 November 1904, 4
1905	Bishop Auckland	Missionary Demonstration	Yes	Durham County Advertiser, 19 May 1905, 5
1907	Newcastle	Medical Missionaries Exhibition	Yes	Conte-Helm, 74
1909	Hartlepool	Sales of Work	Yes	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 1 November 1909, 2
1910	Hexham	Japanese Fete	Yes	Newcastle Journal, 15 July 1910, 6
1911	Hartlepool	Japanese Evening	Yes	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 6 November 1911, 4

Year	City	Name	Charity	Source
1912	Hartlepool	Garden Fete	Yes	Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail, 22 June 1912, 6
1912	Berwick	Oriental Bazaar	Yes	Berwickshire News and General Advertiser, 20 August 1912, 2

G – Retailers and Shops which Advertised Japanese Objects in Newspapers Published in the North East of England, 1861-1913

Starting Year	Town	Name	Address	Japanese Objects
1861	Durham	Andrews, George	64 Saddle Street	Textiles, Ceramics, Screens, Lacquerware, Prints/Paintings, Bronzes, Fancy Goods
1862	Sunderland	Rennison	12 Bridge Street	Other
1864	Newcastle	Dunn	Albion House, Market Street Gray Street	Textiles
1865	Durham	Shields	11-14 Market Place	Textiles
1865	Sunderland	Smith, Miss	195 High Street	Textiles
1866	Newcastle	Milling, John	20, 22, 24, 26, 28 Grainger Street	Textiles, Fans, Lacquerware, Umbrellas
1867	South Shields	Kirkley, W. J.	5 Market Place	Textiles
1867	Sunderland	Brough, W. H.	13 Norfolk Street	Lacquerware
1868	Durham	Ferens, W. H. & J.	4-5 Market Place	Textiles, Fancy Goods
1868	Newcastle	Carrick, Misses E. M. & S.	19 Mosley Street	Ceramics, Fancy Goods
1868	Newcastle	Corbett, J.	1 Mosley Street	Textiles
1868	North Shields	Green, Joseph	9-10 Union Street	Textiles
1869	Durham	Johnston & Coxon	29 Silver Street	Textiles
1869	Newcastle, Sunderland	Stewart, William	33 Grainger Street, 27 Sandhill	Ceramics
1869	South Shields	Edgar, J.	5 Church Row	Textiles
1869	South Shields	Lightford, G. D.	13 West Holborn	Textiles
1871	South Shields	Hedley, Henry	28-29 Market Place	Textiles
1871	Sunderland	Turnbull, T. S.	Albion House, 122-125 High Street	Textiles, Screens, Lacquerware, Fancy Goods
1873	Alnwick	Allen & Son	St. Michael Pant.	Textiles
1873	Alnwick	Robson & Robson	Paikes Street	Textiles
1873	Blyth	Gray, Robert	Sussex Street	Textiles
1873	Darlington	Davison & Son	3 King Street, 59 Northgate	Textiles
1873	Newcastle	Blencowe	2 Northumberland Street	Textiles
1873	North Shields	Hedley, John	19-20 Union Street	Textiles
1873	North Shields	Paley, Robert	111 High Street opposite John Street	Other

Starting Year	Town	Name	Address	Japanese Objects Advertised
1873	Sunderland	Corder, Alexander	High Street, 21 Fawcett Street	Textiles, Fans, Ceramics, Screens, Lacquerware, Umbrellas, Prints/Paintings, Bronzes, Fancy Goods, Other
1874	Newcastle	Coxon, James	Market Street, Grey Street	Textiles, Ceramics, Lacquerware, Other
1874	Newcastle	Foreign Service Supply Company Ltd	13 West Grainger Street	Textiles
1874	Newcastle	Mawson, Swan & Marston (Morgan)	7, 9, 11 Grainger Street West	Textiles, Ceramics, Screens, Bronzes, Fancy Goods
1874	North Shields	Hill, D.	Howard Street, Union Street	Textiles, Fancy Goods
1874	South Shields	Wigham, William	20 King Street	Fancy Goods
1874	South Shields	Yorke, Henry A.	7 King Street	Textiles, Ceramics, Lacquerware, Prints/Paintings, Fancy Goods
1875	Alnwick	Hindmarsh, W. R.	Market Street	Textiles
1875	Blyth	Lee & Taylor	Northumberland House, Turner Street, Waterloo	Textiles
1875	Darlington	Jackson, C. R. and J.	10 High Row	Textiles
1875	Jarrow	Hope, J. T.	Ormonde Street	Textiles
1875	Morpeth	Rutherford, George	Bridge Street	Textiles, Fans
1875	Newcastle	Harrison, J. & H.	Grey Street	Lacquerware, Fancy Goods, Other
1875	Stockton on Tees	Raper, John	40 High Street	Textiles
1875	Sunderland	Binns, H. & Son	172-173 High Street	Textiles, Fans, Lacquerware
1875	Sunderland	Robinson, George Henry	Havelock House, 224-8 High Street, 1-3 Fawcett Street	Textiles, Ceramics, Lacquerware, Prints/Paintings, Fancy Goods, Other
1877	Durham	Wood, John	78 Claypath	Fancy Goods
1877	Morpeth	General Furnishing Warehouse	Bridge Street	Textiles
1878	Sunderland	Rounthwaite, S. & M. E.	25 Holmeside, Borough Road	Fancy Goods
1879	Hexham	Parker	Market Place	Lacquerware
1879	Sunderland	Harrison, W. B.	Bridge Street	Screens
1879	Sunderland	Hobkirk, Smith & Whitecross	62 Fawcett Street	Textiles

Starting Year	Town	Name	Address	Japanese Objects Advertised
1880	Durham	Sanderson, John	2 Silver Street	Other
1880	South Shields	Glover, T. and Son	37 King Street	Fancy Goods
1880	South Shields	Percival, Percy	20 King Street	Fans, Ceramics, Fancy Goods
1881	Berwick	Cairens, R. & Son	13 High Street	Textiles, Lacquerware
1881	Newcastle	Foreman	47-49 Grey Street	Textiles
1881	Newcastle	Mather & Armstrong	7-9 Grey Street	Fancy Goods
1881	North Shields	Maudlin, Mrs	Saville Street corner Camdem Street	Fancy Goods
1881	Sunderland	Rutherford, T.	218 High Street	Fancy Goods
1881	Sunderland	Taylor, J.	72 High Street West	Fancy Goods
1882	Gateshead	Snowball & Son	Kent House, High Street	Textiles, Fancy Goods
1882	Newcastle	Bunn & Dick	10 West Grainger Street	Fancy Goods
1882	Newcastle	Robson & Sons	42 Northumberland Street	Screens
1882	Stockton	Watson & Brigham	High Street	Textiles
1882	Sunderland	Beardall, Thomas	58-9, 62-3 High Street West	Textiles, Fans, Fancy Goods
1882	Sunderland	Brockhill, W.	174-5 High Street	Fancy Goods
1882	Sunderland	Hunter, Robert	5 Fawcett Street	Textiles
1883	Middlesbrough	Purcill, John	n/a	Fancy Goods
1883	Morpeth	Beastall	67 Bridge Street	Other
1883	Stockton on Tees, West Hartlepool	Carter	London House	Lacquerware, Umbrellas, Fancy Goods
1883	Sunderland	Blackett & Son	High Street West, Union Street	Textiles, Ceramics, Screens, Bronzes, Fancy Goods
1884	Alnwick	Robertson Thomas & Sons	Narrowgate Street	Screens
1884	Bishop Auckland	Duff & Rowntree	42 Market Place	Ceramics, Fancy Goods, Other
1884	Darlington	Trattles, T.	19 High Row	Fancy Goods
1884	Darlington, Stockton on Tees	Mossom, William & Son	82 Bondgate; 19 High Row; 7a Bridge Road	Ceramics, Fancy Goods
1884	Newcastle	Kerr, Walter	135 Northumberland	Fancy Goods
1884	South Shields	Brash & Willan	31-32 King Street	Fans, Lacquerware
1884	Stockton on Tees	Holmes, Alexander	Northern counties' supply store	Textiles, Ceramics

Starting Year	Town	Name	Address	Japanese Objects Advertised
1885	Darlington	Ward, F. E.	17, Blackwellgate	Fans, Ceramics, Screens, Lacquerware, Fancy Goods
1885	Durham	Robinson, Mark	85 New Elvet	Screens
1885	Sunderland	Calvert, Jas. T.	High Street	Textiles, Fans, Ceramics, Lacquerware, Fancy Goods
1886	Berwick	Smeaton	99 High Street	Fancy Goods
1886	Jarrow	Routledge, J.	69-71 Ormonde Street	Lacquerware
1886	Jarrow, North Shields	Green & Byers Ltd.	Ormonde Street, Howard Street	Textiles, Fans, Screens, Lacquerware
1887	Durham	H. Windross	9 Elvet Bridge	Fans, Screens
1887	North Shields	Griggs	Bedford Street	Lacquerware
1888	Jarrow	Japanese Bazaar	6 Western Road	Fancy Goods
1888	Middlesbrough	Hedley, John	Cleveland House, Linthorpe Road	Fans, Ceramics, Lacquerware, Fancy Goods
1888	South Shields	Johnson	4 Victoria Terrace	
1889	Alnwick	Moore Bros.	Fenkle Street	Fans, Screens
1889	Berwick	Steven, Robert C.	15-17 West Street	Lacquerware
1889	Durham	Collinson, J. & Son		Fans, Ceramics, Screens, Lacquerware
1889	Jarrow	Burns, J. H.	Ellison House, Ellison Street	Fans, Fancy Goods
1889	Middlesbrough	Punch Brothers	20 Newport Road	Screens
1889	Sunderland	Coates, John	corner Fawcett Street and Borough Road	Fans, Ceramics, Screens, Fancy Goods
1889	West Hartlepool	Central Hall	Church Street	
1889	West Hartlepool	Mansfield, W.	Musgrave Street	Fancy Goods
1890	Middlesbrough	Lisney & Dickson's	56, 58, 60, 60a Linthorpe Road	Screens
1891	Bishop Auckland	Giant Furnishing Emporium	Victoria House, 36-37 Newgate Street	Screens
1891	Middlesbrough	Osborn, J.	88 Sussex Street	Fancy Goods
1892	Middlesbrough	Jones, T.	Newport Road	Screens
1892	Middlesbrough	Lightgow & Storry	Cleveland House, Wilson Street	Screens
1894	Stockton on Tees	Birkbeck	98 High Street	Fancy Goods
1895	Darlington	Todd Brothers	86-87 Northgate	Textiles
1896	South Shields	Jones & Taylor	34 Ocean Road	Fans, Screens, Fancy Goods
1896	Stockton on Tees, West Hartlepool	Robinson, M.	149-150 High Street	Textiles, Fancy Goods, Other

Starting Year	Town	Name	Address	Japanese Objects Advertised
1897	Middlesbrough	Dickson & Benson	Linthorpe Road	Textiles, Lacquerware
1898	Sunderland	Greenwell, W.	13 Holmeside	Bronzes
1900	Sunderland	Robinson & Ward	108 High street West	Textiles
1900	Sunderland	Todd, E. L.	230 High Street West	Textiles
1902	Newcastle	Beavan	Shields Road, Heaton Park Road	Textiles
1902	Middlesbrough	Newhouse	2, 4, 6 Albert Road; 35, 37, 39 Wilson Street	Textiles
1905	Bishop Auckland	Gray, R.	20 Newgate Street	Textiles
1906	Middlesbrough	Wright & Co.	2, 4, 6, 8 Sussex Street	Ceramics
1912	Sunderland	Webster & Shewan	35 Fawcet Street	Textiles

Note: "Other" includes weapons, ivories, and lanterns.

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