

Westernization of Japanese Food Culture and Export Porcelain in the Meiji Era

明治期における日本人の食生活の変遷と輸出磁器について

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Abstract: 明治時代に瀬戸を中心とした輸出磁器のうち、当時の森村組が、米国向けに輸出した「オールドノリタケ」と呼ばれる磁器が、当時の主たる輸出国であるアメリカ市場でどのように受け入れられていったかを中心に考察を行いたい。

近代日本の輸出食器の歴史において、最も重要な出来事は、1913年の、フルディナーセット完成である。そのため森村組においては、白色硬質磁器とセットの中心となるディナープレート＝八寸皿（24.24cm）の研究に心血が注がれた。

そういった過程の中で、

- 当時の日本人が外来食器というものにどれほどの知識を持ち、関心を抱いていたのか。
- 最重要輸出国であったアメリカにおける食文化は当時どのようなものであったのか。

について焦点を当ててみたい。

また、ディナープレートと同様、輸出食器のもう一つの重点項目であるカップにも目を向け、日本と欧米におけるコーヒー・カップにおける重量の違い - が示す文化の違いについて等の考察を行う。またそれが、従来の日本の食文化にも関連性があることから、前半は日本人の外来食文化の受け入れについて踏み込んでみたい。

後半は、日本と対比して、アメリカの食生活と食文化の変化について、考察し、日本の輸出磁器がアメリカの保護関税の障壁といかに戦って、その確たる地位を築き上げたかをまとめてみたいと考える。

Keywords: Full Dinner Service, 8 *sun* plate, Mail-order catalogue, *Chabudai*, American Trade Protectionism.

Preface

Japanese porcelain originated in the Seto region of Japan and was exported starting from the early Meiji era. Pieces manufactured by Morimura-kumi, now referred to as “Old Noritake”, are particularly admired for their superb quality.

Morimura-kumi founder Morimura Ichizaemon’s approach was to develop his business independently, without government support, and this allowed him greater freedom to focus specifically and consistently on the aesthetic tastes of American consumers, whom he recognized as the company’s largest (and thus most important) target market. It is important to note that at the time the attitudes of most Japanese wavered between maintaining traditional culture and embracing Westernization.

In the United States at the time, hand-painted porcelains imported from Britain, France and Germany occupied the majority of the tableware market. These imported goods tended to be expensive and thus affordable only among those in the higher echelons of society.¹ The middle classes also aspired to own such European porcelains, but could only do so if they could be obtained at a lower price.

I would like to examine how Japanese export porcelain producers such as Morimura-kumi formed a bridge between the traditional and modern, and the Eastern and Western, porcelain worlds, and epitomized the entrepreneurial and experimental spirit of the era.

1. Completion of a Full Dinner Service

1) The Road to a Successful Full Dinner Service

In *Design & Culture in the Twentieth Century*, Penny Sparke refers to the great influence of design decisions on the modern world, noting that it is typically the aesthetics of any given product that are the focus for both designer and customer.² Among all of its Japanese contemporaries in the ceramics market of the day, it was Morimura-kumi that had the strongest understanding of the importance of design decisions. Morimura Ichizaemon (1839-1919), founder of Morimura-kumi recognized that the first step to succeeding in the export porcelain business was to teach Western design methods to his painters and to produce

¹ Philippa Glanville. *Elegant Eating*. London: V&A Publications. 2002, p 40.

² Penny Sparke. *Design & Culture in the Twenties Century*. London: Unwin Hyman. 1986, Introduction p 8.

Westernized coffee sets.

In 1913, first Japanese porcelain full dinner service was exported from Nippon Toki (Morimura-kumi was renamed to Nippon Toki in 1904)³ to the United States. However, the path was not smooth.

Ezoe Magoemon (1885-1964), second Research and Development manager in Morimura-kumi joined in 1910⁴. Okura Kazuchika (1875-1955), chairman of Nippon Toki instructed Ezoe on how to produce pure white porcelain, and in 1912 they travelled to Europe to conduct research. Ezoe's travel diary has recently been discovered. Leaving the port of Tsuruga in Fukui Prefecture on 21 July 1912, they travelled throughout the summer to 20 September 1912, with visits to the Victorian factory in Karlsbad and the Zegel Laboratory in Berlin in early August.

Kazuchika and Ezoe visited *Chemisches Laboratorium Fur Tonindustrie* (Chemical Laboratory for Clay Industry) in Berlin, where they met with one Dr. Cramer and requested that his staff analyze the porcelain bodies they brought with them. Dr. Cramer had the porcelain bodies analyzed, and afterwards emphasized three main points about the samples: the raw materials should be more pure; the particles of the clay mixture should be finer; and the body mixture should be aged longer.

On 16 August 1912, Nippon Toki received a letter⁵ from Dr. H. Seger and Dr. E. Cramer of the Chemical Laboratory for Clay Industry recommending experiments on raw materials including Yamaguchi kaolin, Tokiguchi kaolin, Goto *raseki* (wax stone), Amakusa clay, quartz, feldspar and limestone, with the aim of better determining how to make pure white porcelain. Dr. Cramer suggested carrying out a careful examination of the effects of these materials, as well as reducing the amount of Amakusa porcelain stone and extending trommel rotation time.

In 1913, Morimura-kumi received Dr. Cramer's research report stating that a

³ On 1 January 1904, Morimura-kumi was renamed Nippon Toki Gomei Kaisha (Nippon Toki Ltd.), located at the address Noritake, Aza, Takaba village, Aichi Ward, Aichi Prefecture. Okura Kazuchika became the first chairman at the age of twenty-nine.

⁴Ezoe was born in 1885, the first son of Arita potter Hachizō. Having graduated from Arita Industrial High School in 1905, he relocated to Tokyo and studied at Tokyo Industrial School (now Tokyo Industrial University), where Gottfried Wagner was teaching Western porcelain design.

⁵ Letter dated 16th August 1912 from Prof. Dr. H. Seger & E. Cramer G.m. b..H Chemisches Laboratorium für Tonindustrie-und Tonindustrie Zietung.

mixture of forty parts Amakusa porcelain stone, thirty parts Yamaguchi frog-eye clay, seven parts Gotō soapstone, twenty parts Mitsuishi soap stone and three parts limestone would yield the best combination for the clay material. Likewise, the best glaze combination was found to be thirty-two parts Mitsuishi feldspar, twenty-five parts Norwegian feldspar, sixteen parts dolomite,⁶ fifteen parts clay powder and six parts Karlsbad kaolin.

In November 1913, the first pure white *8-sun* dinner plate was produced. Over twenty years had passed since Morimura Ichizaemon had first set his sights on porcelain production, and ten years had passed since Nippon Toki had been established and commenced serious research into white porcelains.

Finally, in June 1914, a dinner set was produced using the best combination of materials. The decoration chosen for the first dinner set exported from Japan had the name “SEDAN” on it. The first twenty sets were exported in 1914, and the first order from the United States arrived in 1915. Thereafter orders increased sharply, with 10,000 sets ordered in 1916, then 30,000 sets in 1917 and 40,000 sets in 1918. From this point, dinner sets became the company’s primary export item. The outbreak of World War I in July 1914 created a precipitous decline in exports of European porcelains to the United States. As a result, the demand shifted to Noritake and allowed to company to increase its production dramatically.

2). Plate Sizes in the 1897 Morimura Export Invoice

In the 1920’s, when Noritake products were being sold in the United States, it was usual for eight 27-cm dinner plates to be included in a standard set along with eight 21-cm salad plates. In time, the number of plates in a dinner set was gradually reduced as such sets came to be used more by ordinary families, instead of more exclusively for the lavish parties of the European nobility. Today, Noritake makes it a rule to provide twelve dinner plates in a full set of 93 pieces, eight in a set of fifty-five, and six in a set of forty-three. The items required in a dinner set have also varied depending on changes in customs and usage, but, the key item that all dinner services have in common is the dinner plate. **Fig. 1.** details the sizes of the plates listed in the 1897 Morimura Export Invoice.

As mentioned earlier, the first full dinner service was exported in 1914, after the manufacture of 9 1/2” plates had been achieved. Yet the Invoice above, from much earlier, already lists plates of that diameter or larger, including five pieces of 1-*shaku* 2-*sun* (36.36 cm).

⁶ Dolomite is a double salt mineral made up of calcium carbonate and magnesium carbonate.

The reason for this is that such large plates are not perfect circles, but rather ovals, rectangles, irregular circles, or smaller circle plates with larger floral or rosette pattern rims.

Until 1913, the potters had been unable to produce perfectly circular plates in such larger dimensions because they had not paid sufficient attention to the needs of the circle centre. They had been making them thick in centre, thereby causing them to droop. When they broke the large circular Limoges plates in order to examine them, they recognized that they were made thin in the centre in order to prevent such sagging. Thus, for this simple reason, the potters in Morimura-kumi were unable to produce perfectly circular large plates until finally in 1913 they recognized this requirement and the technique to achieve it. To compensate, as suggested by the number of the larger plates listed in the Morimura Invoice, we see that they had been trying to make larger plates by avoiding perfect circles. In fact, Japan had been exporting Imari porcelains of 1 *shaku* or larger from Arita to Europe even since seventeenth century. The pictures of the plates in the Invoice show that Morimura-kumi tried to produce larger plates not only for decorative purposes, but rather for use as part of a full dinner service.

3) Larger Circular Plates in the Dinner Service and Their Designs

After the completion of the 8 *sun* (24.24 cm) dinner plate in 1913, the first 2,000 dinner services had been exported by the end of that year. How did size and design of these exports contribute to the development of dinner services?

The largest dinner plates in the Sears & Roebuck⁷ catalogue measured 8 inches in diameter and were produced by Haviland China in France, Alfred Meakin in England, or Dunn, Bennett & Co in England.

The description of a “23 Piece China Tea Set” appearing in a 1927 Sears & Roebuck Catalogue reads: “The decoration consists of a blue lustre band with a black line”. A “Jap China 23 Pc. Tea Set” in a Butler Brothers⁸ catalogue of August 1929 is described as “Double lustre 3 decorations (tan with blue bands, blue with tan bands, and iris with mother-of-pearl bands). Black inner line”. This latter has been identified by Joan Van Patten as a Morimura-kumi piece in her book⁹.

⁷ Sears & Roebuck Company is one the largest mail-order catalogue companies in the United States. It was founded by Richard Warren Sears (1863-1914). Sears founded R.W. Sears Watch Company in Minneapolis in 1886 and sold it three years later for \$100,000.

⁸ Butlers Brothers Company was established by Edward Butler (?–1905) in New York, as a distributor of English ceramics, in the late nineteenth century.

⁹Joan, Van Patten. *Nippon Porcelain Fifth series*, Paducah: New York: Collectors Books 1984,p 43.

Another scenic design, “Tan & Cream Lustre” listed in “Old Ads Featuring Noritake China” in a December 1931 Butler Brothers catalogue is very like the designs listed in the 1927 Sears & Roebuck catalogue. The design in the Sears and Roebucks features trees by water with a mountain in the background.

An advertisement reading “Colourful Scenic Pattern in Hand Painted Imported Noritake China” in the Larkin¹⁰ Catalogue #104, Fall/Winter 1930, and another, “Popular Scenic Pattern Imported Noritake China” in their catalogue #111, Spring/Summer 1934 features a very similar scenic design to that illustrated in the 1927 Sears and Roebuck of catalogue. In a Noritake dinner service of 1930, the largest size of cake plate is 9¾ inches, whilst one of the 1934 services features dinner plates with diameter of 9¾ inches. The 1927 Sears & Roebuck Catalogue shows cake plates measuring 9½ inches. Variations of the scenic design “Tree in Meadow” have been used since the end of the Meiji period. Morimura-kumi’s 1908 Design Book included a scenic design for a chocolate pot. This is clearly a variation of the company’s scenic “Tree in meadow” design, although houses, more trees, bushes, and a sharp ridge of mountains have been added. “Vase with gold, scenic design” from 1911-21 (H25.5 cm) shows a clear version of the Noritake “Tree in meadow” design¹¹ whilst another vase, “Vase with gold jewels and scenic design” from 1911-21 (H27 cm) depicts similar trees but in reverse, although the mountains here are clearer than those on the other vase.

The Noritake Company selected this design for cover of their first official catalogue of “Early Noritake” published in 1996¹², which indicates their recognition of it as one of the representative designs of early Noritake. It can be assumed that the table wares featuring the scenic design in the 1927 Sears & Roebuck Catalogue was produced by Morimura-kumi (which by then had become Nippon Toki).

In considering these catalogues of Sears & Roebuck, Larkin, and Butler Brothers, it is apparent that large dinner plates measuring more than 8 *sun* were included in dinner services by 1927.

¹⁰ The Larkin Co: The Larkin Co. established the Buffalo Pottery in 1901 to produce Larkin products and premiums Larkin established relationship with Noritake to produce porcelain for its catalogue sales when it became too costly to produce its own items at Buffalo Pottery in the beginning of 20th Century. En Exhibition “Larkin Premium Exposition 2002-The Jerome Puma Larkin Company Collection” was held at Graycliff, Derby, New York in 2002. Various items such as plates and vases with scenic design “Tree in Meadow” were exhibited. Larkin was one of the largest distributors of Noritake porcelain.

¹¹Yumiko Oga. *Old Noritake to Nihon no bi*. [Old Noritake and beauty of Japanese Art] Tokyo:Heibonsha, 2002 p 78.

¹²Toyojir Hida edit. *Early Noritake*. Nagoya: Noritake Company Ltd. 1997,Cover page.

4) Cup & Saucer Weights

Because Japanese dining customs include holding tableware in one hand and chopsticks in the other, Japanese cups and plates are generally much lighter than in other countries. The average Japanese porcelain rice bowl weighs between 100 and 130 grams; the most popular 23-centimeter dinner plates weigh about 460 grams, and cup-and-saucer sets weigh between 250 and 270 grams. In contrast, the most popular American dinner plates are 27 centimetres in diameter and weigh about 620 grams, while cup-and-saucer sets weigh between 300 and 350 grams, including 140-gram cups that are 20 grams heavier than their 120-gram Japanese counterparts.

As for Japanese traditional table wares, modern rice bowls from Arita and Seto weigh about 100 grams, with a total weight of about 155 grams including 50 grams of rice and a set of 5-gram chopsticks. In contrast, Western dining styles have an in-hand weight of only 170 grams for a typical knife and fork set.¹³

One may well wonder whether the weight of porcelain table wares has changed over the years, and also if it varies from country to country. To study this question, I assembled a collection of various cups with capacities around 100 millilitres (about half a full cup of coffee). One of these is a fragment of a 9-centimetre diameter by 8-centimeter high porcelain bowl excavated in Tengudani, Shirakawa in Arita, supposedly produced around 1643. This fragment is estimated to represent about one-fifth of the whole, and based on this the total estimated weight would be about 240 grams. Since typical modern Japanese coffee and teacups weigh only between 100 and 120 grams (rice bowls are about 100 grams), we can speculate that such early-period porcelain from Arita was heavier than modern varieties.

Regarding the weight of Old Noritake, another sample is a 75-gram cup produced around 1908 and exported to the United Kingdom, as well as an 85-gram cup produced around 1910 and exported to the United States. These examples are evidence that even before it successfully achieved an 8-sun dinner plate in 1913 and began exporting full dinner services to the United States in 1914, Noritake was already capable of producing lightweight cups.

Japanese manufacturers were not alone in making lightweight porcelain cups, however. A Royal Worcester Cup from 1913, decorated with a Stinton "Highland Cattle" pattern, weighs just 47 grams, and another example from 1920, depicting a pheasant, also by Stinton, is even

¹³Noritake Shokubunka Kenky kai. *Utsuwa Monogatari* [Story of tableware] Nagoya:Chunichi News. 2000,p 26.

lighter at 33 grams. We should remember, of course, that while Royal Worcester cups decorated by such prominent painters were produced either for display or practical use (depending on the piece, and in many cases it is not entirely clear), Old Noritake wares were exported mainly as practical utensils. Kilns in Kutani did in fact produce thin, highly translucent “egg shell” cups for export, similar to the Royal Worcester cups by Stinton, but at less than 40 grams on average these seem too fragile to have served as truly practical utensils.

The weights of porcelain cups for practical use produced in various countries are as follows (ordered from lightest to heaviest):

Japan	Noritake, Fukagawa, Koransha, Okura Toen	100 grams (average)
France	Limoges (white)	100 grams
Denmark	Royal Copenhagen (Flora Danica)	110 grams
Germany	KPM Berlin (white)	115 grams
United Kingdom	Royal Albert (Bone China)	125 grams
Germany	Meissen (<i>Einzelblumen</i>)	145 grams

This comparison shows that Japanese wares were the lightest and Meissen the heaviest. This does not mean, however, that Meissen—known by 1710 as one of the most advanced porcelain producers in Europe—was incapable of producing lighter porcelains; rather, the relative heaviness of the Meissen cups was likely not an indicator of low quality but instead one of aesthetic preference.

5) Chabudai and Westernisation of Japanese Food Culture

In a compilation of photographs taken by the foreigners from the late Edo to early Meiji periods, ¹⁴there is a photo by Baron Von Stillfried¹⁵ of a samurai taking a meal. He is seated, mostly

¹⁴ *Bessatsu rekishi dokuhon Ikokuujin no mita Bakumatu-Meiji JAPAN..JAPAN* [Photos in the bakumatsu-Meiji taken by foreigners] Tokyo: Jinbutsu 2003, p 72.

¹⁵ Baron Von Stillfried: Austrian photographer, who was born in Bohemian baron family and came to Japan accompanying the Austrian Feet in 1869. In 1871, he established Stillfried Trading Co. and opened photo studio at No. 59, Yokohama Settlement, which he operated until departing for Hong Kong in 1881. In 1877 he obtained all the negatives from the shop formerly owned by Felix Beato, who was well known for taking Japanese historical films. However, in 1878, Von Stillfried handed over Beato's property and management rights to his business partner, Herman Andersen, and within six months took a new position

unclothed, in front of a valuable clock, chopsticks and rice bowl in hand, with *ashitsuki-zen* (*low table with foot for personal use*) on the floor and a woman standing in attendance holding a raw Japanese white radish. The scene seems slightly strange in that it was not a typical representation of Japanese lifestyle at the time and so must have been staged by the photographer to represent his own image of Japanese dining customs. (Ironically, the scene is fairly representative of Japanese dining styles today.)

On the other hand, certain woodblock fan prints by Hiroshige, dated between 1847 and 1850, provide a good contrasting examples showing how Japanese table wares were actually used. One of these, introduced by Rupert Faulkner¹⁶ and depicting Tōnosawa, Izu as “Six Designs from the Depictions of the Seven Hot Springs of Hakone”, shows a woman holding a tray on which are placed a bowl of rice, a large bowl containing a main dish, a condiment bottle, and chopsticks. Another similar fan print depicts a similar set placed on the floor along with a sake bottle, a wooden box, and sake cups.

Further, a book on table manners, published by Okura Magobei for the benefit of the ladies of the day, features a series of prints depicting tea cups, bowls, and pots placed on the floor, as well as some on trays in a more formal Japanese manner.

Orthodox Western cuisine was introduced in Japan primarily during the period spanning the late Edo to early Meiji eras. The first book prescribing Western table manners was written by Katayama Jun'osuke and published (using a pseudonym) by Fukuzawa Yukichi in 1867, just one year before the Meiji Restoration. This book notes, “In the West it is not uncommon for a large gathering to include as many as twenty or thirty guests”.¹⁷

The close relationships with Fukuzawa Yukichi enjoyed by Morimura Ichizaemon and Okura Magobei, vice president, as well as their attendance at the World Exhibitions, undoubtedly gave both entrepreneurs opportunities to partake of Western food; but in establishing Morimura-kumi they may have found it difficult to convey the relevant knowledge and images to the artisans in their employ, since most of these probably had no actual experience with Western dining tables and their wares.

Ichizaemon is known to have stated that Morimura-kumi's focusing on ceramics had largely to do with the fact that ceramics' potential for breakage would ensure steady product turnover and a healthy business in re-orders. Nonetheless, it would be impossible to ignore the

instructing mintage for the Mint Bureau.

¹⁶Rupert Faulkner. *Hiroshige Fan Prints*. London: V&A Publications. 2001, p 69.

¹⁷Haruhiko Asakura et al edit, *Jibutsu kigen jiten* Tokyo:Tokyod .2001,p 206.

fact that Japanese society at the time was already demonstrating great flexibility in embracing all manner of foreign foods and other aspects of foreign culture.

Japanese traditional fine cuisine researcher Kumakura Isao remarks in *A Cultural History of Japanese Cuisine— Kaiseki Ryōri*¹⁸ that one of the most prominent features of Japanese culinary culture has been its ongoing acceptance of influences from abroad. He even goes so far to suggest that the rice cakes offered to the deities in Japanese Shinto shrines, which one would assume must be purely Japanese, were in fact clearly influenced by customs found in Tang Dynasty China. That said, while some foreign influences were embraced, others were denied, for example the custom, adopted by the aristocracy in both Europe and China, of dining around a central table. This dining style, known to the Japanese as “*daikyō ryōri*” 大饗料理 and once marginally adopted as a formal dining mode among aristocrats during the Heian period (794–1185), never took root or developed further among the general populace. The use of spoons, too, was another custom that never became entrenched. The custom of eating directly from dishes led to the development of bowls shaped specifically to be easy to hold up to the mouth. Hot soup, for example, was (and still is) sipped directly from wooden bowls, the low heat conductivity of which made them easy to hold and thus obviated the need for spoons. Such customs of eating and drinking directly from bowls also led to the personalization or individualization of tableware. Bowls, dishes, and even tables themselves began evolving to forms geared toward personal use, and the use of large tables for dining faded out.

Traditionally the Japanese had been in the habit of taking meals on small individual tables, but the Meiji era saw the invention of low dining tables known as “*chabudai*”. In 1891, the *chabudai* with folding legs was patented and became very fashionable throughout the country. Dining around a table together with other family members, sitting directly on the floor with no chair, was a groundbreaking new custom for the Japanese, and one that made it much easier for potters and pottery painters to visualize Western dining styles.

In 1892, a café in Nagoya began serving coffee in cups with spoons at the affordable price of fourteen *sen*. On 4 November 1893, the *Yomiuri News* advertised “healthy sandwiches” being served by a restaurant in Kanda, Tokyo (costing 4 *sen* 5 *rin* each). The Matsuya Coffee Company, the country’s largest coffee bean wholesaler, was established in 1908 in Nagoya. Around the same time as the invention of the *chabudai*, the Japanese as a society were experiencing a great deal of contact with foreign foods, and it is clear that both entrepreneurs like Ichizaemon and Magobei and artisans in general were keen to embrace such new

¹⁸Isao Kumakura. *Nihon-ryori Bunka-shi* [History of Japanese food and culture] Tokyo: Jinbun Shoin 2002, p 10.

experiences. This burgeoning cultural awareness must have made it easier for artisans working with Morimura-kumi to understand the production and painting of Western-style tableware, and such acceptance of Westernization undoubtedly contributed positively to the development of export porcelain.

2. The American Porcelain Market in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries

1) American lifestyles and tableware

The completion of the first coast-to-coast railroad in the United States promoted the advance of technology in general and improved available distribution channels. Newly affluent and offered more abundant foodstuffs than ever, people's attention naturally turned to tableware. It was not long after the American Civil War that a new type of professional, the travelling salesman, began appearing in rural areas throughout the United States. With the advancement of the railroad, salesmen could visit outlying retail shops and farmers with bags full of catalogues to sell all sorts of goods, including porcelains. After sending in their orders to their company headquarters, they made arrangements to have the orders shipped by rail.

It was also around this time that the increase in urban consumer populations necessitated larger stores that could offer a diversity of goods, an opportunity that eventually led to the creation of America's major department stores, which started operations in close proximity to the railroad stations.¹⁹

Cabinets for storing and displaying porcelain wares first appeared in trade catalogues in the United States in the 1880s, and were in common use by 1900. Taxidermy pieces were replaced by porcelain and silverware as decoration in the dining room. The timing of this expansion of middle-class participation in formal dining coincides with the establishment of a custom of giving porcelain and silverware as wedding gifts. In New York, the porcelain and glass company Higgins & Seiter offered a catalogue for "those wishing to purchase 1/4 less than elsewhere" suggesting that "the best Wedding Present is something useful as well as ornamental and of service to both contracting parties".²⁰ Books on table etiquette and style appeared at the beginning of 1900, one of the first examples being *Serving a Dinner* by a chef at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel, offered by Higgins & Seiter by mail order in 1903.

American porcelains at that time were, strictly speaking, soft porcelains.²¹ Although they

¹⁹ It is said that Macy's transformed from a regular retail shop to a major New York department store around 1870.

²⁰ Home page from Higgins and Seiter
<http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.com/~mjhiggins/companies1.htm#seiter>

²¹ The term "soft porcelain" refers to British porcelains; French soft porcelains, Parian porcelains or other porcelains

seemed to be hard, analysis shows that they contained ball clays²² or bone ash. Because of this, the American potters of the day had to rely on imports for all or part of the raw clays they required, a situation that continued well into the early part of the twentieth century.

The owner of Higgins & Seiter advised Noritake that key points to observe in order to expand the porcelain business included regarding tableware as the most important item and recognizing American consumers' preference for pure white porcelains. Noritake took this advice and increased production to meet the demands of America's rapidly modernizing culinary culture.

2) American Trade Protectionism and the Japanese Response

Morimura-kumi's pricing decisions, designed to account for high customs duties, is a good reference example in considering the business conditions in the United States in the nineteenth century.

In the 25 May 1912 edition of the *Kobe Yushin Nippō* we find the headline "Export Ceramics," followed by an article with the line "...among the destinations for Japanese porcelains, the United States of America is the number one market, taking in sixty percent of all exports...", underscoring the importance of exports to the U.S. at that time. Just two months later, the *Osaka Mainichi Shinbun* ran a story mentioning a slump in domestic demand and expressing concern over the increasing use of flawed or poor ceramic products as exports. In October that same year, the *Osaka Jiji Shinpō* suggested that sluggishness in the ceramics trade had to do more with a more general slump in trade with America, caused mainly by domestic demand tapering off as the nation awaited the outcome of its presidential elections. But another reason for the gradual annual drop in U.S.-bound exports must also have been the increasing difficulty overseas products faced in remaining competitive in an American market influenced by the U.S. government's protectionist policies.

A year later, the *Osaka Mainichi Shinbun* ran the headline "Ceramics Industry In Crisis", accompanied by an article suggesting that in the future the U.S. would be aiming to become not an importer but rather an exporter of ceramics, and that the Japanese export

produced using a special solvent other than feldspar. Conversely, the term "hard porcelain" refers to those produced by using a solvent made from feldspar or feldspathic stone mixed in with the raw clay of ordinary porcelain.

²²Ball clay ("Kibushi" in Japanese) : ball clay or *Kibushi* contains Kaolinite as its main component. This is drift clay produced after granite or other weathered materials are carried by flowing water and then deposited. In many cases, the ball clay contains fragments of zinc carbide that look like wooden knots or balls, hence the name. It presents a white colour after baking, and features highly plastic properties. While its chemical composition is virtually identical to that of frog-eye clay, ball clay is more plastic and more fire-resistant than frog-eye clay. It is frequently used in the making of kiln covers to be used when baking porcelains. Many Seto potters used ball clay produced in Shinano or Motoyama in the Seto region.

ceramics industry would do well to avoid misjudging this future trend on the part of its largest customer. The article also suggested some concrete solutions, including learning from the pricing moderation of Germany and from the high quality of English tableware, and making an urgent priority of improving firing methods.

While England, aiming to be “the factory of the world” ever since the Industrial Revolution, had been evolving away from its traditional of mercantilism to a policy embracing free trade, Russia and America stood in stark opposition to this as the world’s two most major proponents of trade protectionism.

In *America’s Protectionist Trade Policies*, Sasaki Takao remarks that while England’s average import tariffs on manufactured goods were roughly 0% in both 1875 and 1913, Russia’s ranged from 15% to 20% in 1875 and hit 84% in 1913, while America’s were 44% in 1913 (tariffs for 1875 are unclear). Particularly after the Civil War (1861–1865), American protectionist import policies regarding imports that competed with domestically manufactured products continued in a variety of forms. Specifically, import duties began to rise with the Morrill Tariff of 1861 and such trade protectionism became even further entrenched with the McKinley Tariff Act of 1890 (which pushed the average tariff to 49.5%).²³ The Wilson-Gorman Tariff Act of 1894 brought a slight drop, but in 1897 the Dingley Tariff Act returned tariffs to their previous high levels, and from then on strongly protectionist policies continued to dominate the nation’s import situation. Imported manufactured glass items, for example, were taxed at the rate of 45% under the McKinley Tariff Act, and while this rate fluctuated somewhat over the years, by 1920 it had hit a record high of 60%. During that time, glass imports from Europe naturally decreased steadily year by year, while the American glass industry flourished under careful protection. In addition to rising tariffs, so-called “invisible tariffs” (non-tariff barriers) were also part of American protectionism, including for example the McKinley Tariff Act’s requirement that products imported from abroad bear “authentication of origin” marks.

Of course, some traders of the day were not necessarily inclined to bow so readily to such stipulations. There were, for example, Japanese exporters like tea purveyor Otani Kahei, who in 1898 went to America to negotiate a tariff on processed tea imports directly with President McKinley himself, and was rewarded for his efforts by its repeal.

Most traders, however, were ultimately compelled to comply with American trade regulations. In the ceramics industry, for example, England’s Wedgwood Company began adding the country name “ENGLAND” accompanying the Wedgwood logo.

Japanese porcelain makers for some reason initially chose the designation “Nippon” instead of

²³ Takao Sasaki. *America no Tsush -seisaku* [America’s Protectionist Trade Policies] Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten. 1997, p 54

“Japan” to mark the country of origin on their products. In 1918, however, the U.S. State Department issued further instructions requiring the country-of-origin mark to be “in legible English” and so it was changed to “Japan”. Nonetheless, it took about three years for this avis to become generally and fully heeded, so that even as late as 1921 many porcelains marked “Nippon” were still being exported from Japan.

In such ways we see foreign porcelain manufacturers, including those in Japan, resisting American protectionism, while at the same time vying with one another to advance their products into the American market.

Conclusion

In 1913, Nippon Toki exported its first dinner sets to the United States. The following year, in wake of the short supply of European exports caused by the outbreak of World War One, porcelains by Japanese ceramics and other Japanese manufacturers began to enjoy huge popularity.

After the war, amidst America’s gradually growing self-confidence as a major power, the dinner set pages of a 1927 Sears catalogue show a distinct change in advertising format: the American tableware is still listed first, but in the following pages roughly equal space is given to introducing the various qualities of products from other countries including England, Germany and France, offering customers the freedom to choose based on their personal preference. Japanese tableware also appears. The price of a twenty-three piece Japanese tea set was \$4.25, or roughly the same as similar American and English semi-porcelain and porcelain sets, although lower than the \$6–7 for some of the luxury sets by Haviland and certain German manufacturers.

In 1927 Sears & Roebucks catalogue we find, in addition to the above, dinner sets featuring azalea motifs and other patterns, and these are identified as Noritake porcelains. The catalogues of other major ceramics retailers, such as Butler Brothers, also offered Noritake porcelains. The implication is that by 1927, Japanese tableware, including Noritake, had permeated the American market and was already known among the citizenry alongside similar American and European products. It was the beginning of an era in which American consumers were finally free to select American, European, or Japanese tableware according to their own personal preferences.

Morimura-kumi started their export porcelain business in 1859 and succeeded to export full dinner service set in 1913. In so many ways, they formed a bridge between the traditional and modern, and the Eastern and Western, porcelain worlds, and epitomized the entrepreneurial and experimental spirit of the era. By uniting this factor, Morimura-kumi was able to produce

the highest quality export porcelain in the Meiji Era. Japanese export porcelain producers such as Morimura-kumi at that time found themselves in the awkward position of having to choose between maintaining tradition and pursuing Westernization, but most eventually realized that to survive they had to focus on Westernization at least in terms of both design and technique.

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Figure 1.

Sizes of Plates Listed in the 1897 Morimura Export Invoice

Traditional Units	Metric	Number
4 sun 4 bu	13.33 cm	1
4 sun 5 bu	13.64 cm	2
4 sun 8 bu	14.55 cm	1
5 sun	15.15 cm	2
5 sun 5 bu	16.67 cm	1

6 sun	18.18 cm	4
6 sun 5 bu	19.70 cm	1
7 sun	21.21 cm	4
7 sun 8 bu	23.64 cm	1
8 sun	24.24 cm	7
8 sun 5 bu	25.67 cm	3
9 sun	27.27 cm	2
9 sun 5 bu	28.79 cm	3
1 shaku	30.3 cm	10
1 shaku 5 bu	31.82 cm	1
1 shaku 1 sun 5 bu	34.85 cm	1
1 shaku 2 sun	36.36 cm	5
	Total	49

1 sun equals about 3.03 cm; 1 shaku equals 10 sun or 100 bu

Conversion Tool

0	sun	5	bu	→	1.52	cm
1	shaku	0	sun	→	30.30	cm
1	shaku	1	sun	5	bu	→ 34.85 cm