

Study of a Letter by Seue: The Activities of Court Nobles Residing in the Provinces during the Warring States Period

TAKANASHI Masayuki

This paper examines a letter that was written by Seue and was included in the album of ancient calligraphy specimens (formerly in the collection of the Imperial Household Ministry's Treasures Section) that is housed in the Museum of the Imperial Collections (Sannomaru Shozokan), and the paper evaluates that letter's historical value through historical and paleographic approaches.

The conventional view has long been that, as a result of the wars following the Onin Rebellion, some court nobles who had been serving at the Imperial Palace in Kyoto took refuge in the provinces to escape the fighting, thereby disseminating court-oriented literary culture to those regions and contributing to the cultural advancement and development of provincial daimyo families. In contrast, a new understanding has been proposed that the provincial residences of high-ranking noble families, including families eligible to produce regents and imperial advisers, possessed a distinctly political character. This paper analyzes the circumstances of the provincial residences of middle- and lower-ranking court nobles with reference to the aforementioned document, thereby shedding light on the activities of those nobles during their stays at provincial residences. From this analysis, the following findings emerged: The letter's author, Seue, is identified as the former court official Reizei Noritoo, who resided in Yamaguchi, the stronghold of the Ouchi clan, daimyo of Suo Province; the letter reports to the Imperial Court on the circumstances in which Seue actively served as an intermediary for the Ouchi clan, which had received a request from the court to collect revenues from imperial estates. The letter confirms that Seue played an active role in the Ouchi clan's diplomatic negotiations with the Imperial Court and with daimyo of other provinces. The paper thus demonstrates that this document can be evaluated as a source revealing the actual state of the Ouchi clan's external negotiations and offers insights into provincial nobles' understanding of their service obligations to the Imperial Court. Thus, the paper demonstrates that the provincial sojourns of middle- and lower-ranking court nobles can be understood not merely as vehicles for disseminating literary culture, but also as a phenomenon imbued with strong political significance.

Musical Instruments among the Imperial Treasures

GOMI Hikaru

This paper examines musical instruments that were managed as imperial treasures by the Imperial Household Ministry and the Tokyo Imperial Household Museum from the early Meiji era until 1947. These instruments form a group centered on the *biwa*, *koto*, *wagon*, *sho*, and various flutes used in Japanese imperial court music (*gagaku*). They are currently preserved in three locations: the Museum of the Imperial Collections (Sannomaru Shozokan), Tokyo National Museum, and Kyushu National Museum. This group of instruments has at its core those that were used for performances at the Imperial Palace (the present-day Kyoto Imperial Palace) and in its environs during the late Edo period. Added to these were instruments presented to Emperor Meiji (1852–1912) in the early Meiji era. Together, they form an important assemblage of artifacts that illuminate the relationship between the imperial family and music, as well as the transmission of musical instruments, during a period of profound social transformation from the early modern era to the modern era. Investigations of the instrument inventory that was handwritten by Emperor Komei (1831–1867) and related catalog materials preserved in the Imperial Household Archives within the Archives and Mausolea Department of the Imperial Household Agency clarified the provenance of each instrument, as well as its history of exhibition at fairs and repairs during the Meiji era. In addition, this paper summarizes the gifting of instruments by daimyo families to Emperor Komei, including by the family of Ii Naosuke, lord of the Hikone domain, as well as by *tosho-ke* (hereditary court nobles occupying relatively high ranks) and others. The paper also examines Emperor Komei's own performances and his personal engagement with these instruments. Furthermore, this paper touches on the fact that, during the Meiji era, while these instruments were exhibited to the public at fairs and other events as imperial treasures, they were also loaned out for string and wind performances organized by former *tosho-ke* who had become peers (*kazoku*) and by others, thereby introducing the various situations surrounding these instruments during this transitional era.

The Chōsen Art Exhibition and the Imperial Household Ministry

TANAKA Junichiro

This paper provides an overview of the purchases made by the Imperial Household Ministry at the Chōsen Art Exhibition, based on official documents preserved in the Imperial Household Archives within the Archives and Mausolea Department of the Imperial Household Agency. It also introduces works of Eastern-style painting and Western-style painting acquired by the Ministry that are now housed in the Museum of the Imperial Collections (Sannomaru Shozokan).

The Chōsen Art Exhibition was established in 1922, and the Imperial Household Ministry purchased works exhibited at the first through the thirteenth exhibitions in order to preserve and promote Korean art. In these purchases, there was no inequality between works by Japanese and Korean artists, and there were even cases in which the latter were prioritized. However, when these amounts are compared with those for purchases at the Imperial Art Academy Exhibition, which was held in Japan proper during the same period, a stark disparity is seen, despite the Chōsen Art Exhibition and the Imperial Art Academy Exhibition both being official exhibitions.

Most of the purchased works were selected from among the prize-winning pieces. The Imperial Household Ministry entrusted the Government-General of Korea with the recommendations, and the Government-General had the judges in each category nominate candidates. The Ministry had no ideal image in mind for what to purchase, and there were no conditions other than upper limits on the budget and the number of pieces. However, since the judges dispatched from Japan proper valued Korean local color, this tendency was inevitably reflected in the purchased works.

No purchases by the Imperial Household Ministry have been confirmed at the Taiwan Fine Arts Exhibition nor at the Manchukuo Art Exhibition, revealing that the Chōsen Art Exhibition received privileged treatment unparalleled among colonial art exhibitions. This likely stems from the recognition on the part of the Ministry of the importance of the Chōsen Art Exhibition as a symbol of cultural politics based on Japan-Korea assimilation promoted by the Government-General of Korea following the March First Movement of 1919 against Japanese colonial rule in Korea.

Information Security at Museums: Insights from Incidents and Recent Trends

MISHIMA Taiki

Information security at museums tends to be approached by deductively applying general information security precautions that are not tailored to museums. However, there are situations where information security measures that are not linked to on the ground activities at museums are required. Therefore, this paper aims to clarify the characteristics and points of attention for information security at museums by analyzing information security incidents that have occurred at museums and relating them to museum activities. The analysis revealed that incidents linked to museum education and museum websites, including collection databases and social media, and to public relations stood out among museum activities, and that incidents linked to museum management can lead to serious conditions affecting the museum's overall operations. It also specifically highlighted points of attention for information security in each museum activity. In addition, the paper examines information security at museums regarding cloud services, generative AI, and disinformation in the recent digital environment surrounding museums. It argues that information security in the era of generative AI, where disinformation proliferates, requires not only the passive information security that is widely recognized as defending against cyber attacks, but also the proactive information security that is achieved through information dissemination via museum websites (including collection databases and social media) and public relations. This involves providing accurate information about museums and, as much as possible, detailed information about a large number of collections on the internet in a form that generative AI can reference.

Research Note: *Folding Screens with Scenes Illustrating Du Shenyan's Poem* Attributed to Maruyama Okyo

JOSHIMA Satoshi and TODA Hiroyuki

Folding Screens with Scenes Illustrating Du Shenyan's Poem, which are housed in this museum, consist of five folding screens: one eight-panel screen and two pairs of six-panel screens. They have traditionally been attributed to Maruyama Okyo (1733–1795). It is known that Okyo did indeed paint scenes illustrating the poem “A Response to Deputy Lu’s Poem on a Walk in Early Spring” written by the Tang poet Du Shenyan as wall and sliding-door paintings in the first room of the Emperor’s private quarters in the Imperial Palace—scenes that were completed in 1790. However, due to extensive overpainting in later periods, Okyo’s style became difficult to discern, and the attribution has been regarded as no more than tradition.

This paper conducts a detailed comparison between the *Folding Screens with Scenes Illustrating Du Shenyan's Poem* and the following: historical documents describing the production process of the wall and sliding-door paintings, preliminary drawings and copies preserved in various collections, the corresponding room in the present Imperial Palace completed in 1855, and related materials. The comparison clarified that these folding screens were converted from paintings that had been affixed to the entire surface—namely the paintings affixed to the tokonoma, the walls, and the sliding-door—of the first room of the Emperor’s private quarters, excluding the enclosed shelf beside the tokonoma (on which *Pines and Bamboo of the Four Seasons* were depicted). It had long been assumed that nearly all the wall and sliding-door paintings were lost in the fire that struck the Imperial Palace in 1854. However, as far as the first room of the Emperor’s private quarters is concerned, the original paintings were replaced with entirely different ones in 1831. At that time, they appear to have been removed from the building and thus to have escaped the fire.

Furthermore, regarding the composition, it can be pointed out that it probably borrowed pictorial vocabulary from Chinese printed editions and incorporated Western perspective techniques. Moreover, the composition on the wall paintings featuring a large rock mountain and flowing water that seem to advance toward the viewer may connect to the style of Okyo’s final years, as seen in works like *Waterfall* on the tokonoma wall in the Landscape Room at Kotohira-gu Shrine in Kagawa Prefecture, completed in 1794.

Research Note: Kato Tomotaro and His Pottery-Making Activities as Seen in This Museum’s Collection

OKAMOTO Takashi

This museum houses four works by Kato Tomotaro (1851–1916). He is known as a potter who produced outstanding work using the underglaze painting technique. Among the four pieces in the collection, one is Tomotaro’s representative work, *Vase with Corn Design in Cobalt Underglaze*, which was exhibited at the First National Ceramics Competition (Zenkoku Yogyohin Kyoshinkai) in 1901, received the highest honor of a first-class gold medal, and was purchased by the Imperial Household Ministry. The other three pieces—a gift for an imperial celebration, an exhibition work, and a piece commissioned by the Imperial Household Ministry—are characterized by clearly documented production periods. Having a verifiable production period is rare among ceramics of the Meiji era and makes these works important reference examples in ceramic history research.

In addition to introducing these works, the main body of this paper reviews Tomotaro’s roughly 35 years of pottery-making and discusses contemporary evaluations of his works in exhibitions as well as his own production principles. A separate chapter focuses on the relationship between his pottery-making activities and the imperial family, revealing purchase records by the Imperial Household Ministry from official documents. Furthermore, the paper introduces, as a highlight of the relationship between Tomotaro and the imperial family, an anecdote in which, during the First National Ceramics Competition, where *Vase with Corn Design in Cobalt Underglaze* was exhibited, Tomotaro demonstrated pottery-making as entertainment in the presence of the Empress (Empress Dowager Shoken) who visited the venue, and the Empress touched the vase with her finger. Appendices include a chronology of Tomotaro’s activities, a list of his exhibition entries, and a record of purchases by the Imperial Household Ministry.

Research Note: Letters from Ito Hirobumi to Hijikata Hisamoto—Centered on the *Horan-jo Letter Collection*

YOSHIZAWA Naoyuki

This paper starts by introducing the binding and other features of the *Horan-jo Letter Collection* housed in the Museum of the Imperial Collections (Sannomaru Shozokan) and then provides full transcriptions of all 21 letters from Ito Hirobumi to Hijikata Hisamoto contained in Volume B of this letter collection, with explanatory notes. The letter collection consists of five volumes and is a collection of letter to Hijikata Hisamoto, with a total of 202 letters pasted in. Hijikata Hisamoto was an official in the Imperial Household Ministry who held key positions in the imperial court, including aide to the Emperor (*jiho*), Minister of the Imperial Household, and privy councilor. He belonged to the court faction that held Confucian values and was initially in opposition to Ito Hirobumi, who advocated a constitutional polity modeled on Western systems, over issues such as the positioning of the Emperor and the relationship between the court and the government. However, after becoming Minister of the Imperial Household, Hijikata gradually adopted a position closer to Ito's. A diachronic examination of the letters from Ito Hirobumi to Hijikata Hisamoto contained in this letter collection reveals that, while their respective intentions intertwined in complex ways, they deepened their cooperation through practical administrative work and simultaneously built up each other's political capital. While determining the impact that this had on policy outcomes remains a task for future research, an integrated analysis of diaries and letters scattered across various institutions together with the letters to Hijikata Hisamoto housed in this museum would make it possible to center the discussion on Hijikata Hisamoto and would help establish a solid research foundation for the political history of the Meiji era. This paper represents an initial attempt in this direction by providing full transcriptions and analyses of all the letters from Ito Hirobumi. It is hoped that future analyses of the historical materials contained in this letter collection will enable a dedicated study on Hijikata Hisamoto.

Research Note: Exhibition Practices, Brand Strategies, and Institutional Collaborations in Overseas Royal Collections—European Case Studies from a Cultural Diplomacy Perspective

MATSUI Kuniko

This paper examines exhibition practices, brand strategies, and institutional collaborations at overseas palaces and museums housing royal collections, drawing on field research and analyzing these practices from a cultural diplomacy perspective. Effectively communicating the value and appeal of such collections to diverse audiences, including younger generations and international visitors, has been an ongoing challenge for many institutions stewarding imperial and royal collections. Focusing primarily on European case studies, this paper seeks to derive insights that may inform policy development aimed at addressing this issue.

The study first outlines the basic conceptual framework of cultural diplomacy and soft power as it frames the present discussion, arguing that royal collections constitute significant cultural resources through which nations project their cultural appeal both domestically and internationally. It then analyzes selected cases, including the Royal Collections Gallery (La Galería de las Colecciones Reales) in Spain and the newly opened gallery at Paleis Het Loo in the Netherlands. Particular attention is paid to exhibition strategies that bridge past and present—for example, chronological displays linking successive monarchs with artworks, references to contemporary social issues, and the enhanced visibility of current royal families—thereby reducing the perceived psychological distance between visitors and the collections. The paper further explores renewed brand strategies at some of the institutions surveyed, highlighting how they balance respect for tradition with contemporary accessibility. It also examines the role of institutional collaborations, such as those facilitated by the Association of the Royal Residences of Europe, in fostering knowledge exchange and generating synergies among participating institutions.

Through these analyses, the study demonstrates the three elements—exhibition practices, branding strategies, and institutional and professional collaborations—are closely and dynamically interconnected. Multilayered interpretive approaches deepen the narrative dimensions of collections; strategic branding enhances their cultural appeal; and collaborative networks foster sustainable, mutually beneficial development—together, these elements contribute to the practice of cultural diplomacy. Finally, the paper suggests that such international exchanges provide valuable opportunities for museums to reassess their distinctive identities within an international context and to strengthen their global presence as an actor in cultural diplomacy.

Collection Introduction: The Copy Accompanying *Request to Return to Japan with the Japanese Envoys to the Tang Dynasty* Attributed to Kukai

YAMADA Yukiho

This paper introduces the storage box, authentication slip (*kiwamefuda*), and copy that accompany *Request to Return to Japan with the Japanese Envoys to the Tang Dynasty*, which is attributed to Kukai and is housed in this museum. These items have not been presented before. The paper also examines the writer of the calligraphy on each. From a comparison of calligraphic styles, the inscription on the storage box is presumed to be by Konoe Iehiro (1667–1739). The authentication slip is identified as having been written in August 1687 by Kohitsu Ryomin, the fifth-generation head of the Kohitsu family of connoisseurs of ancient Japanese writing. The accompanying copy was compared, in both calligraphy and paper, with Iehiro's faithful copy of the *Request* preserved in the Yomei Bunko Library, which transmits the treasures of the Konoe family. As a result, the copy housed in this museum is considered, like the one in the Yomei Bunko Library, to be a faithful copy of the *Request* that is attributed to Kukai and was produced by Iehiro. The work attributed to Kukai was presented to Emperor Meiji by Konoe Tadahiro in 1878. In 1989, it was donated to the nation by His Majesty the Emperor Emeritus and Empress Kojun and became part of this museum's collection. From *Gyokusenjo* (Poems from the Chinese Anthology) by Ono no Michikaze, which was presented at the same time, an inscription (*okugaki*) by Iehiro dated September 21, 1689 (Genroku 2) was discovered during conservation work in fiscal 2001. Iehiro's faithful copy of *Gyokusenjo*, which is preserved in the Yomei Bunko Library, bears an inscription by Iehiro dated late January of Genroku 3 (1690). The copy of the *Request*, which is attributed to Kukai, is preserved in the Yomei Bunko Library, and was made using the technique of double contour filled with ink (*shuanggou tianmo*), is dated September 21 of Genroku 3. These dates suggest the possibility that both the faithful copy in the Yomei Bunko Library and the one in this museum's collection were produced around the early Genroku period.

Collection Introduction: *Four-Panel Hakata-ori Textile Folding Screen*

KOBAYASHI Ayako

In modern times, items created for interior decoration using textile techniques such as dyeing, weaving, and embroidery in forms such as framed pieces, wall hangings, folding screens, and standing screens are called artistic textiles. The *Four-Panel Hakata-ori Textile Folding Screen* housed in this museum was presented by Fukuoka Prefecture to commemorate Emperor Taisho's visit on the occasion of the Army Special Grand Maneuvers in Fukuoka Prefecture in 1916. Since this work is related to artistic textiles and has not previously been shown at exhibitions or similar public displays, this paper provides an overview of the work along with information on its creators and the background of its creation.

This four-panel folding screen features a stepped configuration, with the two central panels rising higher than the two outer panels, and waist-high black-lacquered base panels. Within the black-lacquered frames surrounding each panel, Keya no Oto Cave, a scenic spot in Itoshima City, Fukuoka Prefecture, is depicted in embroidery. Research has revealed that the weaving was carried out by the Nakanishi Hakata-ori Textile Factory led by Nakanishi Kinjiro (1866–1929), who at the time was expanding his business by improving dyeing techniques and thread for Hakata-ori textiles while actively developing products and obtaining patents. The embroidery was executed by Iida Shinshichi (1859–1944), the fourth-generation owner of Takashimaya Kimono Store in Kyoto, with Kinjiro coordinating this collaborative production. This folding screen suggests that new aspects of embroidered folding screens can be revealed by examining them not only as artistic textiles that flourished as interior decorations in the modern period, but also as items presented to the Imperial Family.

Collection Introduction: *Tree-Lined Avenue* by Ota Kijiro

TANAKA Junichiro

This paper introduces *Tree-Lined Avenue*, which Ota Kijiro (1883–1951) created during his studies in Belgium. Ota went to Belgium in 1908 after graduating from Tokyo Fine Arts School. He spent four and a half years in Belgium, studying under Emile Claus (1849–1924), a painter of Luminism, a movement related to Impressionism in Belgium. After visiting various European countries, he returned to Japan in 1913.

After returning to Japan, Ota exhibited *Tree-Lined Avenue* along with two other works at the Tokyo Taisho Exposition in 1914. *Tree-Lined Avenue* was purchased by Emperor Taisho and Empress Teimei and was displayed in a Western-style room of the Kasumigaseki Detached Palace, among other locations.

Tree-Lined Avenue is a work of significant importance from Ota's period of studies in Belgium. It has been confirmed that Ota's diary and production notebook from October 1910 contain descriptions related to *Tree-Lined Avenue*. According to Yamada Makiko, the curator at the Meguro Museum of Art who introduced these materials, Ota's production notebook was his personal record for reference. It contains notes on work titles, dimensions, and production dates, and occasionally includes simple sketches of the works. For *Tree-Lined Avenue*, dates from September 20 to October 8 and dimensions are recorded, with an October 22 note indicating "to Claus's atelier." Additionally, notes in French read "avenue lined with yellow-leaved trees, 3:30 p.m., Leopold Street," revealing both the time of day and the location where this work was painted.

According to the diary entry of October 22, *Tree-Lined Avenue* received high praise from his teacher, Claus. *Tree-Lined Avenue* is a work that deepened Ota's confidence in his artistic production and marked a turning point in his studies in Belgium.

Report: The Three-Dimensional Measurement of Archaeological Artifacts Housed in The Museum of the Imperial Collections, Sannomaru Shozokan

HOSOKAWA Shintaro

From fiscal 2023 to 2024, three-dimensional measurements were taken of archaeological artifacts housed in the Museum of the Imperial Collections (Sannomaru Shozokan). The measured objects included bronze products such as bronze mirrors from the Former Han dynasty of China (206 BC–8 AD), as well as stone objects and metal helmets from the Kofun period.

For the measured works, stereolithography (STL) data (information necessary for design and fabrication) and orthophotos (images in which measurement data is corrected and the measured object is orthogonally projected as a plan view) were created. Additionally, for some of the bronze mirrors, replicas were fabricated as prototypes using a 3D printer (stereolithography).

Joint Research Report: Characteristics of Expressive Techniques in Maruyama Okyo's *Peony and Peacock* Based on Optical Analyses

JOSHIMA Satoshi and SUZAWA Mei

In fiscal 2024, The Museum of the Imperial Collections, Sannomaru Shozokan and the Graduate School of Fine Arts, Tokyo University of the Arts conducted a joint research project titled “Characteristics and Evolution of Production Techniques in the *Shaseiga* of the Maruyama School,” carrying out visual observations and optical analyses of Maruyama Okyo's *Peony and Peacock* in the museum's collection.

Peony and Peacock, painted in 1776, shares a composition with a work on the same subject painted five years earlier and housed at Shokoku-ji Temple. In fiscal 2020, Suzawa conducted visual observations and optical analyses of the Shokoku-ji version, and it was expected that a similar analysis of the museum's version and a comparison of the two would yield concrete insights into the techniques of *shaseiga* (realistic sketches of nature), at which Okyo excelled.

It was found that many techniques were shared with the Shokoku-ji version, including the technique of drawing an underpainting in ink on the silk and layering pigments over it, as well as the technique of selectively using several types of metal mud. On the other hand, differences were observed in some areas regarding the pigments used and the methods of expression, suggesting the possibility that even with the same subject matter, the elements that were emphasized differed depending on the patron's wishes and the work's intended use.