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Introduction of Korean Culture at the Tokyo National Museum

History of the Tokyo National Museum

The Tokyo National Museum (TNM) is the oldest museum in Japan and just recently celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2022 (Figure 1).¹ The TNM was born as a product of Japan's modernization policy. The modernization of Japan began from the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Before then, Japan had been under the feudalistic rule of the *shogunate*, which had been based in Edo, present-day Tokyo. The new Meiji government, which was led by the emperor, was inaugurated as Japan repudiated the previous feudal system and accepted Western civilization in their attempt to join the ranks of modern nation-states around the world during then. The emperor subsequently moved from Kyoto to Edo, which was renamed Tokyo, meaning "eastern capital." The Meiji government emphasized exhibitions as a means to carry out the policies of civilization and enlightenment, namely, the Westernization of culture, and industrial development, which meant the modernization of industries. The policy of the Museum Bureau of the Ministry of Education regarding exhibitions involved collecting material and setting up venues and facilities into museums. These grand plans were centered on a comprehensive museum encompassing culture, nature, and industries and included the functions as a zoo, botanical garden, and a library. However, as the reforms of systems and institution and rapid changes in manners and customs led by the Meiji government took place, a tendency of thinking little of Japanese traditional culture started to spread, with people discarding or destroying Japanese art and architecture without any qualms or hesitation. Before long, the many Buddhist

statues and Buddhist ritual implements that had been stored in the Buddhist temples were abandoned and found their way into the hands of antique dealers. In face of this crisis of cultural artifacts, the government proclaimed the first ordinance related to the preservation of cultural assets called "How to Preserve Antique Artifacts and Past Objects," encouraging people to protect antique works of art, which heightened the need for a museum as a public institution for their collection and preservation. In 1872, the Museum Bureau of the Ministry of Education held the first official exposition in Tokyo in the Main Hall (Taiseiden) of the Yushima Seidō. Yushima Seidō, or Yushima Sacred Hall, is a Confucius shrine that was built in 1690 following the orders of Tokugawa Tsunayoshi 徳川綱吉, the then *shogun*, and later became an academy under the authority of the *shogunate*. The Yushima Seidō Exposition was held also to prepare for the world fair that would be held in Vienna the following year, and the Museum Bureau of the Ministry of Education solicited submissions across Japan in anticipation of the future construction of a museum. Approximately 620 items were put on display during this exposition, mainly the items from the imperial household and antique works of art as well as specimens of animals, plants, and minerals. The exposition was the birth of a modern museum that permanently collected, preserved, and exhibited cultural assets and is said to be the founding of the Tokyo National Museum.

The Yushima Seidō Exposition was well received and remained open to the public on holidays even after the official exposition was over. The jurisdiction, location, and area of collection of the Museum Bureau of the Ministry of Education went through several changes following government reorganization, and finally, in 1882, a full-fledged museum opened on the current site in Ueno. The vast site, which reaches approximately 100 thousand square meters, became home to the (former) Main Hall as well as two exhibition halls and a smallish botanical garden. The extensive exhibition space allowed the collection to encompass nine areas—national products, agriculture and forestry, crafts, art, historical material, books, weapons, education, and horticulture—and exhibitions were held according to these categories. In the early years, spaces such as the British Museum, the South Kensington Museum (currently, the Victoria and Albert Museum) of the UK or the Jardin des Plantes (currently, the National Museum of Natural History) in France were considered as ideal models for the museum. The museum in Ueno was then transferred to the Imperial Household Agency and renamed the Imperial Museum, and later, the

¹ For more on the history of the Tokyo National Museum, refer to the catalogue for the special exhibition *Tōkyō kokuritsu hakubutsukan no subete* 東京国立博物館のすべて (All About the Tokyo National Museum), which was held at the Tokyo National Museum in 2022 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of its founding (Tokyo National Museum 2023).

Tokyo Imperial Museum as it developed while maintaining close ties with the imperial family until 1947. When the works that had been submitted to the Exposition Universelle of 1900 in Paris returned to Japan, they were put on display during a special exhibition held by the museum for the first time. Since then, special exhibitions have continued to be held by the museum.

In 1923, the Great Kanto Earthquake broke out, leading to the damages of most of the exhibition space. The following year, exhibitions resumed in the Hyōkeikan, which had miraculously survived the disaster, although the natural products including the specimens of animals, plants, and minerals were transferred to what was then the Tokyo Museum (currently, the National Museum of Nature and Science, Tokyo). Subsequently, after greatly downsizing the organization, the museum proceeded to focus its activities and exhibitions to the area of history and art. In this process, it broke away from the exposition organization, which had been linked to the policy of industrial modernization of previous generations, and instead shifted its focus to its collection and investigation and research, moving in the direction of protecting and disseminating culture and arts. In 1938, based on the architectural design proposal by Watanabe Jin 渡辺仁 that was done in what is known as the Imperial Crown Style, the (current) Main Hall (Honkan) was built, fully equipped with cutting-edge facilities at the time. With its opening, the Tokyo Imperial Museum made its character clear as an art museum mainly of antique Japanese and Eastern art. The museum continued operate during World War II but closed in 1945 following the intensification of air raids until the war was over.

Fortunately, the museum was spared any serious damage from the war and reopened in 1946. Following the democratization and imperial property consolidation policy by the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ) and discussions with the Civil Information and Education Section (CIE) over a new image for the museum, the Tokyo Imperial Museum and its collections were declared national property, and the museum was once again placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. Under the new Constitution of Japan, the emperor became the symbol of national unity, and popular sovereignty was established. On May 3, 1947, the day the Constitution of Japan went into effect, the Tokyo Imperial Museum became a national museum and took its first step as a museum for the people and was renamed Tokyo National Museum in 1952. The TNM busily engaged in exhibition activities in tandem



Figure 1. Main Hall (Honkan), Tokyo National Museum

with the rapid economic growth of Japan. In 1964, the year of the Tokyo Summer Olympics, the Main Hall was repaired and renovated, and the (old) Gallery of Hōryūji Treasures (Hōryūji Hōmotsukan) opened as an exhibition hall to display the treasures donated by Hōryūji Temple. In 1968, the Asian Gallery (Tōyōkan) opened as a space to present the cultural artifacts from parts of Asia, and in 1984, the center for art history research was renovated. In 1999, the (new) Gallery of Hōryūji Treasures opened, and Heiseikan was erected as an exhibition hall dedicated to archaeological material and special exhibitions in commemoration of the marriage of the now emperor, who was the Crown Prince back then. Finally, in 2001, the Tokyo National Museum became an independent administrative institution.

Korean Cultural Assets at the Tokyo National Museum

Since antiquity, Japan has actively accepted foreign culture while developing its own culture. After the culture of rice cultivation was transmitted from the Korean peninsula during the Yayoi period (fifth century BCE to third century CE), the people of the Japanese archipelago have always loved the material

culture produced in other countries and accepted various works of art and crafts including paintings, calligraphy, metalwork, ceramics, lacquerware, and dyed and woven items. The majority of them were produced in the Chinese continent and Korean peninsula, although in some cases, items from West Asia also reached Japan via the Silk Road. Among the material culture that was transmitted to Japan, many became the foundation for the subsequent development of Japanese culture. The cultural assets that have been designated as National Treasure or Important Cultural Property of Japan according to the Act on Protection of Cultural Properties are not only limited to those made in Japan but include artifacts produced in China and Korea as well.

Asian Gallery (Tōyōkan)

Among the 120 thousand items forming the collection of the TNM, 17 thousand were created in foreign countries mostly in Asia. Approximately half of these cultural artifacts are from China, and those from Korea amount to 4,000 items. Items collected around 1872, when the Yūshima Seidō Exhibition was held, can be discovered here and there among the TNM collection, which clearly shows how the TNM has sought cultural artifacts not only of Japan



Figure 2. Asian Gallery (Tōyōkan), Tokyo National Museum

but of Asia from early on. Opportunities to collect and exhibit foreign-made items increased as Japan actively engaged in international cultural exchange after that. In 1968, the Asian Gallery (Tōyōkan) opened as a space exclusively for the systematic display of cultural assets of Asia. The exterior of the building, designed by Taniguchi Yoshirō 谷口吉郎, includes elements that recall the Shōsōin Repository in Nara such as its gabled roof and raised building, was designed as a modern concrete architecture emphasizing vertical and horizontal lines (Figure 2). There are largely 13 exhibition rooms in the Asian Gallery, among which Exhibition Room 10 houses the cultural artifacts of Korea. The items range from archaeological material, paintings, calligraphy, crafts, Buddhist art, to ethnological material (Tokyo National Museum 2008).

Among the archaeological material is the *Sword with a Ring-Shaped Pommel and an Inscription* (collection reference no. TJ-1223) dating to the Three Kingdoms period (Figures 3-1 and 3-2). X-ray photography has revealed



Figure 3-1. Upper part of *Sword with a Ring-Shaped Pommel and an Inscription* (collection reference no. TJ-1223), Three Kingdoms period, 5th century



Figure 3-2. Inscription of *Sword with a Ring-Shaped Pommel and an Inscription*



Figure 4. *The Buddha Amitābha with Two Attendants* (collection reference no. TA-59), Goryeo period, 13th century to 14th century

that there is an inscription carved on the back of the sword that is embedded with silver wire. The inscription, although the beginning has been lost, contains the auspicious phrase, “Someone who carries this sword shall fear nothing and shall be guaranteed high status and wealth.”

The Buddhist art includes *The Buddha Amitābha with Two Attendants* (collection reference no. TA-59) from the Goryeo period (Figure 4). This painting depicts the coming of Amitābha Buddha, who is riding on a cloud and accompanied by Avalokiteśvara (K. Guaneum; J. Kannon) bodhisattva and Mahāsthāmaprāpta (K. Seji; J. Seishi) bodhisattva. The robes of Amitābha and the bodhisattvas are patterned with magnificent and intricate design in gold paint, which is characteristic of Goryeo Buddhist paintings.

The *Album of Korean-Style Paintings* (collection reference no. TH-303) is a collection of small paintings from the Joseon dynasty (Figures 5-1 and 5-2), which includes the painting *The Peach Blossom Spring* by Kim Huseong 金喜誠, a court painter during the reign of Yeongjo (1725–1776). The painting portrays the quiet and peaceful scenery of the peach blossom spring across two pages in the album.

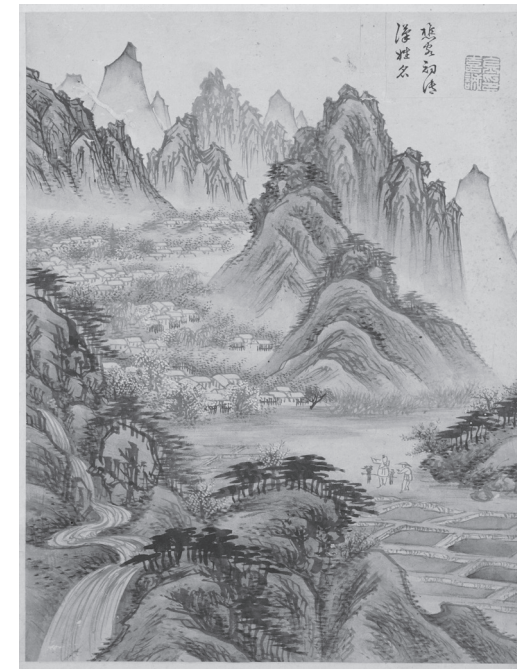


Figure 5-1. First page of *The Peach Blossom Spring* (collection reference no. TA-64) (from the *Album of Korean-Style Paintings*), by Kim Huseong, Joseon period, 18th century

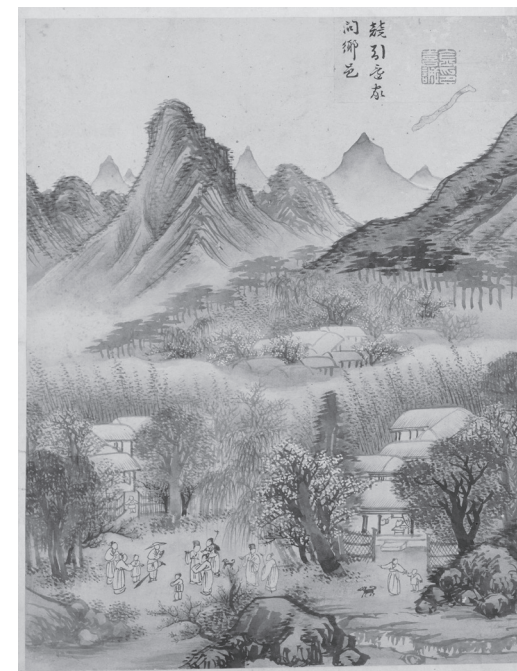


Figure 5-2. Second page of *The Peach Blossom Spring*

Among the ceramics, there is the *Celadon Glaze Vase with Plum Tree, Bamboo, Reed, Willow, and Waterfowl Design in Inlay* (collection reference no. TG-2171) from the Goryeo dynasty (Figure 6). The small opening of the vase widens to form broad shoulders, which then narrow gradually towards the bottom of the vessel, forming a shape called a prunus vase. After inlaying the design on the body in white and red, the vessel has been fired, then coated with celadon glaze to form an image with water birds among trees. It is a characteristic piece of Goryeo ware.



Figure 6. *Celadon Glaze Vase with Plum Tree, Bamboo, Reed, Willow, and Waterfowl Design in Inlay* (collection reference no. TG-2171), Goryeo period, 12th century to 13th century

The lacquerware collection includes the *Sutra Box with Chrysanthemum Design in Mother-of-Pearl Inlay* (collection reference no. TH-303) from the Goryeo dynasty (Figure 7). This item was passed down to the Mōri 毛利 family, a local power of the Chūgoku region of western Japan, although it was originally housed in Taineiji Temple in Yamaguchi Prefecture. On the lid of the sutra box, there are the characters for Buddhāvataṃsaka-nāma-mahāvaiṣṭya-sūtra, “大方広仏華嚴經” (daihō kōbutsu kegon gyō), inscribed in mother-of-pearl inlay. According to the *Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty*, Joseon presented the Tripitaka in a sutra box as a gift to Japan on one occasion, and the possibility that the sutra box traveled to Japan together with the Tripitaka has been raised. It is known as a valuable example of the mother-of-pearl inlay design, which is a representative craft of the Goryeo dynasty. The collection also houses the *Box with Peony scroll in Mother-of-Pearl Inlay* (collection reference no. TH-298) from the Joseon dynasty (Figure 8). This box is thought to have been a chest for keeping the official robes of government officials and was also passed down to the Mōri family. The ink writing on the outer box storing this item writes that it was

ordered from Joseon by the Ouchi 大内 family together with a writing table and an inkstone (the writing table with mother-of-pearl design and inkstone accompanying this box, however, appear to have been made in China). The Ouchi family was also a local power of the Chūgoku region of western Japan and accumulated wealth through trade with China, Joseon, Ryūkyū (present-day Okinawa), and Southeast Asia. They also carried out exchange with the royal family of Joseon and presented the royal family with Japanese folded screens, fans, lacquerware, and weapons, as well as goods they had imported from Ryūkyū and Southeast Asia. In return, they were gifted with Tripitaka and



Figure 7. *Sutra Box with Chrysanthemum Design in Mother-of-Pearl Inlay* (collection reference no. TH-303), Goryeo period, 13th century



Figure 8. *Box with Peony scroll in Mother-of-Pearl Inlay* (collection reference no. TH-298), Joseon dynasty, 16th century

other Buddhism-related items from the royal family. After the demise of the Ouchi family, the Mōri family inherited their culture, which is why the cultural artifacts from Korea have been passed down within the Mōri family (Lee 2015).

The Ogura Collection

The Ogura Collection forms the core of the Korean collection owned by the TNM. The artifacts of this collection were gathered by the businessman Ogura Takenosuke 小倉武之助 and include approximately 1,000 cultural artifacts of the Korean peninsula. Ogura went to Joseon in 1896, where he began his own business, and collected Korean cultural artifacts while living in Daegu. This wide-ranging collection consists of paintings, calligraphy, sculptures, metalwork, ceramics, lacquerware, dyed and woven items, archaeological material, and ethnological material and go as far back as the prehistoric ages up to the Joseon dynasty. The National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage of Korea has researched and photographed the artifacts related to the Korean peninsula in this collection and published the catalogue *The Ogura Collection of the Tokyo National Museum in Japan: Korean Cultural Artifacts* (2005), which provides explanations for the items in both Japanese and Korean.

Among the archaeological material of this collection is the *Headgear with Design in Openwork* (collection reference no. TJ-5033) dating to the Three Kingdoms period (Figure 9). Excavated in Changnyeong, South Gyeongsang Province, this headgear is thought to have been a possession of an influential figure of Bijiguk, a small state that gained power under the influence of Silla. The small, gilt-bronze disks attached all over the headgear would have glittered while emitting a faint rattle as they swayed



Figure 9. Important Cultural Property, *Headgear with Design in Openwork* (collection reference no. TJ-5033), Three Kingdoms period, 6th century

whenever the individual wearing it moved.

The ceramics in the collection include the *Buncheong Ware Vase with a Fish* (collection reference no. TG-2795) from the Joseon dynasty (Figure 10), which was reportedly discovered in Hakbong-ri, Gongju, South Chungcheong Province. The grey base containing iron has been covered with white clay, onto which the design of a broad fish has been drawn with iron paint. This was then covered with a transparent glaze before being fired. Ceramics of this kind were primarily produced near Gyeryongsan Mountain in South Chungcheong Province and were everyday utensils used by ordinary people.



Figure 10. *Buncheong Ware Vase with a Fish* (collection reference no. TG-2795), Joseon period, 15th century to 16th century

The Collection of Hōryūji Treasures

The Hōryūji treasures housed in the TNM also include a few Korean cultural artifacts, such as Buddhist statues from the Three Kingdoms period or Buddhist ritual implements from the Goryeo dynasty. The Hōryūji treasures that were donated to TNM were originally cultural artifacts that were passed down in Hōryūji Temple in Nara.² As a Buddhist temple built in 607, Hōryūji is well known for the world's oldest wooden building standing within its precincts.

² See the catalogue for the special exhibition Hōryūji ken'nō hōbutsu 法隆寺献納宝物 (Treasures Donated by the Hōryūji Temple) held at the Tokyo National Museum in 1996, *Hōryūji hōbutsukan dai san-ban* 法隆寺宝物館 第3版 (2016). In addition, researchers outside of the museum continue to conduct special investigations on the treasures donated by Hōryūji Temple and publish their findings in investigation reports.

The modernization of Japan involved the denial of Japanese traditional culture, during which Buddhist statues were discarded and the treasures of Buddhist temples were scattered and lost. Amid such a crisis, Hōryūji was faced with economic difficulties, which it sought to resolve by donating around 300 cultural artifacts to the imperial household and use the funds bestowed upon them in return for running and repairing the temple. These donated items were transferred to the museum in Ueno in 1882 for storage and exhibition, and after World War II, the majority of them were declared national property in 1949 and became part of the TNM collection. They include many Buddhist statues and crafts dating to the 7th to 8th centuries. The (old) Gallery of Hōryūji Treasures was built in 1964 to store and exhibit the collection, and in 1994, the (new) Gallery of Hōryūji Treasures was built.

The collection includes *Tathāgata and Two Attendants* (collection reference no. N-143) among the Buddhist statues of the Three Kingdoms period. (Figure 11). It is not clear whether the three statues were originally part of a single piece, since the figure of Tathāgata (K. Yeorae; J. Nyorai) has been recognized to be stylistically different from the figure of the two attendants. Records show that



Figure 11. Important Cultural Property, *Tathāgata and Two Attendants* (collection reference no. N-143), Three Kingdoms period, 6th century to 7th century

Buddhism was officially transmitted to Japan in either 538 or 552 by King Seong of Baekje. This piece provides a hint as to how Buddhist statues might have looked during the early years of Buddhism's introduction in Japan.

The *Incense Burner of Geumsansa Temple* (collection reference no. N-291) is shaped as a copper disc sitting upon a high leg. The surface of the vessel is patterned with an inlay of flowers, scrolls, and lotus petals in silver. A furnace for burning incense is thought to have been on the top, although it has been lost and does not exist today. On the rim, there is an inscription stating that it was produced in the fifth lunar month of the 18th year of Dading 大定, or 1178, for the statue of Maitreya at Geumsansa Temple in North Jeolla Province. The item serves as a basis for understanding the crafts of the Goryeo dynasty (Figures 12-1 and 12-2).



Figure 12-1. *Incense Burner of Geumsansa Temple* (collection reference no. N-291), Goryeo period, 18th year of Dading 大定 (1178)



Figure 12-2. *Incense Burner of Geumsansa Temple*

Material Related to the Envoys of Communication from Joseon

The TNM also houses material related to the Envoys of Communication (K. Joseon tongjinsin; J. Chōsen tsūshinshi), who were diplomatic missions sent from Joseon to Japan. During the Edo period, Japan had foreign relations with only four countries: Joseon, China, the Netherlands, and Ryūkyū. The Envoys of Communication from Joseon visited Japan every time the *shogun* changed in order to pay their respects. A total of 12 visits were made between 1607 and 1811. The diplomatic delegation included three envoys—the chief envoy, deputy envoy, and attending aide—who led a group of scholars, medical officials, court painters, and musicians, amounting to 400 to 500 people, who traveled back and forth between Hanyang (present-day Seoul) and Edo (present-day Tokyo). Many people crowded around to see the Envoys of Communication when they arrived in Japan, and guidebooks and woodblocks would be printed. Japanese scholars would visit the lodgings of the envoys and learn about the knowledge and medicine of Joseon and exchange foreign culture, thereby deepening the understanding of each other. Japan and Korea jointly applied to have the “Documents on Joseon Tongjinsin/Chōsen Tsūshinshi” inscribed on UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register, the inscription of which was confirmed in 2017. This addition comprises 333 records, including diplomatic documents remaining in Japan and Korea, travel itinerary records, and other records of cultural exchange. 209 of these records are located in Japan, which include 15 diplomatic letters from the king of Joseon.³ The diplomatic documents include the official records of both Japan and Joseon as well as the diplomatic letters from the king of Joseon. The travel itinerary records describe the appearances of the envoys in detail and the reception provided by the Japanese such as how each domain received the envoys and include drawings and paintings of the procession of the envoys. Finally, the records of cultural exchange consist of writings of poetry by the envoys and written conversations that suggest how scholarly exchange would have taken place between the Japanese and the envoys from Joseon.

The *Diplomatic Letter from the Joseon King* (collection reference no.

B-1768) is a diplomatic document sent from the king of Joseon to the *shogun* in Japan and consists of the main letter and an appendix listing the presents (Figure 13). These diplomatic letters were extremely important in the foreign relations between the two countries. During the early Edo period, there was even an incident where it was revealed that Tsushima Island, which served as an intermediary between Joseon and Japan, had been fabricating the diplomatic letters that should have been from the king of Joseon. The TNM is home to the original copies of 15 diplomatic letters (14 authentic letters and 1 forged letter) from the Joseon king. The box containing the diplomatic letter is painted with red lacquer onto which a five-toed dragon is drawn in gold paint (Figure 14).

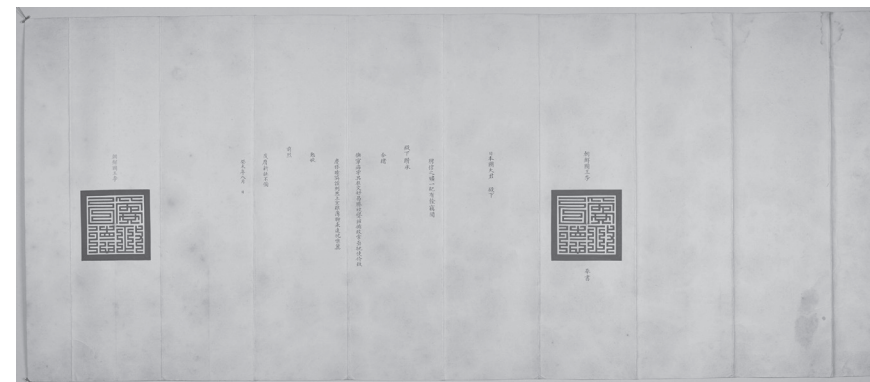


Figure 13. Important Cultural Property, *Diplomatic Letter from the Joseon King* (collection reference no. B-1768), Joseon period, 39th year of King Yeongjo (1763)



Figure 14. Important Cultural Property, *Box with Dragons and Clouds* (for Diplomatic Letters) (collection reference no. B-1768), Joseon period, 17th century to 18th century

³ Inscription of a total of 111 items 333 works (48 articles 209 items in Japan; 63 articles 124 items in South Korea) of the “Documents on Joseon Tongjinsin/Chōsen Tsūshinshi” on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.



Figure 15. *Procession of the Joseon Delegation*, Edo period, 18th century to 19th century

The *Procession of the Joseon Delegation* (collection reference no. A-9327) depicts Envoys of Communication in procession, mainly the chief envoy, deputy envoy, and attending aides bringing the red-lacquered box containing the diplomatic letter (Figure 15).

The *Portraits of the Joseon Delegation* (collection reference no. A-9562) depict the vivid expressions of Kim Igyo 金履喬 and Yi Myeon-gu 李勉求, the chief envoy and deputy envoy, respectively, of the delegation sent from Joseon in 1811 as Envoys of Communication (Figure 16).



Figure 16. *Portraits of the Joseon Delegation* (collection reference no. A-9562), Edo period, 19th century

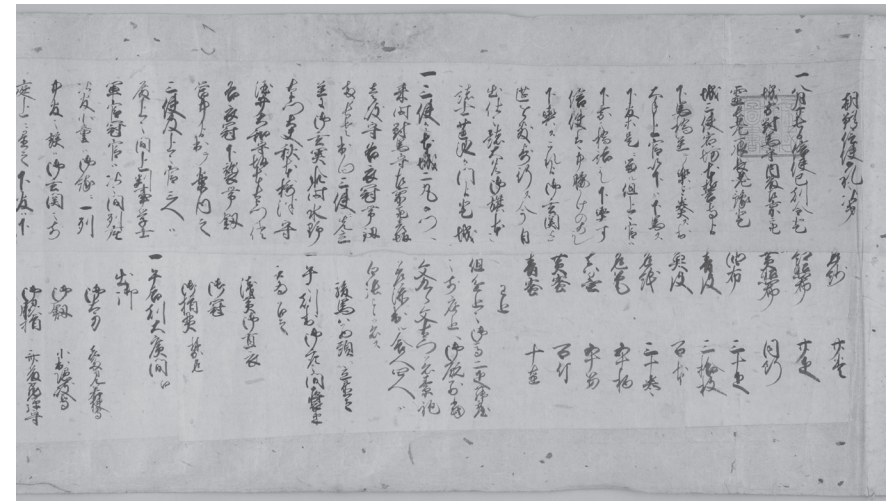


Figure 17. *Memorandum on the Korean Goodwill Delegation to Japan* (collection reference no. B-1752), Edo period, 17th century

The *Memorandum on the Korean Goodwill Delegation to Japan* (collection reference no. B-1752) is the compilation of the documents related to the Envoys of Communication sent from Joseon. These include the presentation of the diplomatic letter from the king of Joseon to the *shogun* in Edo Castle, the entertainment of the envoys with food and drinks, their itinerary along the journey to Edo, how they were received, and the notice sent to the townspeople along the road (Figure 17).

The *Great Confucian Masters and Sages* (Confucius, collection reference no. H-1342) was created to pray during the ceremonial ritual performed to honor Confucius at Senseiden, the early structure of the Confucian temple Yūshima Seidō, at Shinobugaoka Academy. It is composed by 21 paintings depicting ten sages before Confucius, Confucius and his four disciples, and six Confucian scholars during the Song dynasty (Figure 18). Painted by Kano Sansetsu 狩野山雪 in 1632, each painting has been inscribed by Kim Seryeom 金世濂, the deputy envoy during the Envoys of Communication sent from Joseon in 1636.



Figure 18. *Great Confucian Masters and Sages: Confucius*, painted by Kano Sansetsu 狩野山雪, inscribed by Kim Seryeom 金世濂 (collection reference no. H-1342), Edo period, 9th year of Kan'ei (1632)

Clothes Related to the Crown Princess Yeong (Yi Bangja)

Although not part of its collection anymore, the TNM used to house the ceremonial robe that had connections with Crown Princess Yeong of the Korean Empire (Figure 19).⁴ Crown Princess Yeong (Yi Bangja 李方子), was born and raised to be the queen of the Nashimoto-no-miya 梨本宮 house and later became the Crown Princess of the last Imperial Crown Prince of the Korean



Figure 19. *Red Ceremonial Robe* (former possession of Crown Princess Yeong), Joseon period, 20th century

Empire, later Crown Prince Yeong (Yi Eun 李垠) after the annexation of the Korean peninsula. She naturalized to Korea after World War II and, from 1963 onwards, spent the rest of her life in Nakseonjae Hall of Changdeokgung Palace. In 1956, the ceremonial robes in the possession of the princess were donated to the TNM, and in 1991, as a special gesture to contribute to the friendly relations between Japan and South Korea and their cooperation in various areas, these clothes related to Crown Princess Yeong were transferred to Korea.

Exhibitions

The TNM not only holds exhibitions of its own collection but sometimes cooperates with collections in various areas throughout Japan to introduce Korean culture.

Special Exhibition, Envoys from Korea: Japan-Korea Cultural Exchange for 200 Years in the Pre-Modern Period (October 29 to December 1, 1985)

This exhibition was a joint project of the TNM and the National Museum of

⁴ Research on the clothes related to Crown Princess Yeong include Kim and Son 1984; Kim 1985, 1988.

Korea and traveled to be held in the latter institution the following year. The year the exhibition was held marked the 20th anniversary of the normalization of foreign relations by the signing of the Treaty on Basic Relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea. Although the exhibition catalogue does not specially mention this fact, it should be regarded to have been a project intending to celebrate this event. Under the theme of introducing the history of the Envoys of Communication sent from Joseon to Japan, the exhibition not only displayed items among the collection of the TNM and the National Museum of Korea but also items submitted from the collections of other museums, Shinto shrines, Buddhist temples, and individuals across Japan with their cooperation.

Special Exhibition of Cultural Exchange Between Japan and Korea Held in Commemoration of the Co-Hosting of the FIFA World Cup in 2002, Dynastic Heritage of Korea (June 11 to July 28, 2002)

This exhibition was held to commemorate the co-hosting of the FIFA World Cup in 2002 by Japan and South Korea and traveled from the Osaka Museum of History to the TNM. The items on display were all provided by the museums in Korea including the National Museum of Korea and consisted of six themes: 1) Prehistoric Ages and the Three Kingdoms, 2) Buddhist Art, 3) Goryeo Celadon, 4) Joseon Ceramics, 5) Paintings and Calligraphy, and 6) the Royal Court and *Yangban*. As is evident from these themes, the exhibition was a comprehensive chronological survey of each field of Korean culture. The catalogue of the exhibition featured an article by the Korean art historian Gang Ubang 姜友邦, who was a professor at Ewha Womans University at that time, titled “On Korean Art.” This article, a charming piece of writing that narrated the author’s thoughts on art history and academic studies, was by no means simply an introduction listing historical facts related to Korean art. Instead, it wrote about art history as a historical phenomenon and sought to fundamentally trace the history of the culture of form in Korea within the limited pages it was allowed. It should also be noted that the author emphasizes the importance of art history from his own standpoint as a Korean. Because Japan has interacted with Korea ever since the ancient period (the same goes for Japan’s relationship with China), which has allowed the transmission of a large amount of culture, it has an overwhelmingly long history of exchange with Korea compared to any other place in the world. However, this has also led to

a selective acceptance of culture or an assessment of this culture by Japan from its own set of values. For instance, the miscellaneous vessels from the Joseon period were highly regarded by the aesthetics of *wabi-sabi* and the taste for folk crafts of the tea ceremony in Japan, leading to a gap between the aesthetics of Koreans. The material culture of Korea that was displayed during this exhibition and the article by Gang Ubang left a strong impression on myself. Afterwards, I wrote an article about Japanese culture seen from Joseon based on the *Record of a Shepard (Kanyangnok)*, which is a collection of the writings of Gang Hang, a government official of Joseon who became a war captive of Japan during the Imjin War, and contemplated the understanding of different cultures (Inokuma 2005).

Special Exhibition Held for the 50th Anniversary of Relations Between Japan and the Republic of Korea, Smiling in Contemplation: Two Buddha from Japan and Korea (June 21 to July 10, 2016)

This exhibition was jointly planned by the TNM and the National Museum of Korea to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the normalization of foreign relations between Japan and Korea. It was first held in the National Museum of Korea and later traveled to Japan to be held in the TNM. The exhibition displayed the two Pensive Maitreya of Japan and Korea side by side. The Pensive Maitreya is a Buddhist statue in which the figure is sitting with one leg crossed over its other knee, while one of the fingers of the figure’s hand is touching its cheek in a pose of contemplation. During the 6th and 7th centuries, many Pensive Maitreya were created in the Korean peninsula. Although statues striking this pose were created in China to depict Shakyamuni before he left his home, cutting all secular ties, in the Korean peninsula, they are believed to have been created to depict Maitreya Bodhisattva. The collection of Hōryūji treasures of TNM include a Pensive Maitreya made in the Korean peninsula, showing how Buddhist statues in this form traveled to Japan and were later created in Japan as well. The Chūgūji Temple in Nara, Japan, houses an excellent statue of the Pensive Maitreya carved out of camphor wood. During this exhibition, this Pensive Maitreya owned by Chūgūji Temple and the Pensive Maitreya owned by the National Museum of Korea, which has been designated as National Treasure No. 78, were displayed beside each other to express the exchange that took place between the two countries during the ancient period.

Special Display, Korean Court Culture of the Joseon Dynasty (Scheduled to be held from February 4 to March 15, 2020; Discontinued on February 26)

My own research interests lie in the area of comparative study of the material culture of the courts of East Asia such as China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam, and Ryūkyū. As one of the achievements of this research, I planned this special display on the court culture of the Joseon dynasty, which was located in an exhibition room at the TNM. The items that were displayed included the furnishings and clothes related to the court culture of the Joseon dynasty owned by the TNM together with the everyday utensils used by the *yangban* households of courtiers to introduce the court culture of the Joseon dynasty (Figure 20). The royal courts of East Asia, based on the court system of ancient China, consisted of the outer court, where the official state affairs were conducted, and the inner court, where the ruler carried out his private life. The court of the Joseon dynasty accepted the court culture of China while also creating palaces, courts, and clothes in styles that were suitable for living in the Korean peninsula. This exhibition thus introduced the unique court culture that blossomed in Joseon as the outcome. In addition to folding screens with drawings of the palaces and roof tiles showing the architecture of the palace, the display included legal codes showing the system of the court, the clothes of the government officials and women of the court, mother-of-pearl and ox-horn



Figure 20. Special Display, Korean Court Culture of the Joseon Dynasty

plates that show the space of the palaces, and material related to the Envoys of Communication such as the diplomatic letter from the king of Joseon. Unfortunately, this special display was discontinued and ended before its scheduled closing date due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Scholarly Exchange

The TNM has an academic exchange arrangement with the National Museum of Korea and actively engages in the exchange visiting scholars. These scholars in turn present their own research themes and carry out field investigations of the facilities and historical sites in the country they are visiting as they interact with the researchers of that country. I myself went to Korea as a visiting scholar in 2017 and presented my own comparative research of the material culture of courts in East Asia and also conducted research on the historical sites and material related to the royal court of Joseon. Thanks to this research, I was given the opportunity to install a special display of court culture of the Joseon dynasty in the TNM.

Meanwhile, I have also cooperated with the research of a visiting scholar from Korea. This scholar's research involved the repair and restoration of mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware of Korea. I accompanied this scholar on the research of Korean mother-of-pearl inlaid lacquerware owned by museums in Japan starting with the TNM to visit studios that specialized in the restoration of lacquerware and the interviews of and discussions with researchers at universities and research institutions.

During the more recent years, the restoration specialists at the TNM have developed an interest in the restoration of ox-horn plates. The TNM has a few objects from the Korean peninsula using ox-horn plates, among which there was a specific piece that needed repair due to deterioration over time (Figure 21). However, the technique used in this piece required the unique craftwork of Korea, of which it was difficult to conduct investigation and research within Japan. Consequently, the necessary research and investigation is being carried out at a facility in Korea through scholarly exchange.



Figure 21. Box with Flowers, Birds, and Animals Painted on Ox-Horn Plates (collection reference no. TH-283), Joseon period, 18th century to 19th century

In this article, I have reviewed the activities of the TNM to introduce Korean culture. As a researcher of the TNM, there are many opportunities to feel a sense of accomplishment. Among them, it is the project of international exchange that is particularly rewarding. While this is likely the case in the relations between any two countries, foreign relations in the area of politics are not always friendly. However, even during these times, the two countries must continue to hold each other's hand in terms of cultural activities. Even if this is not part of official diplomacy, it does not change the fact that it is also a form of exchange between the two countries. I have also felt that the researchers of museums in the other country feel the same way. At the end of such individual interaction lies international exchange between countries. I hope that Japan and Korea both follow the spirit of building amicable relations between neighboring countries and continue to engage in work that contributes to their friendly relations.

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INOKUMA Kaneki 猪熊兼樹 (inokuma-k7k@nich.go.jp)
Tokyo National Museum

Translated by Boram SEO