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The Korean Ceramics Collection of the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka

Introduction

The tea ceremony was completed in Japan thanks to Sen no Rikyū 千利休 (1522–1591), and starting from the 16th century, the collection of Korean ceramics, specifically, Kōrai 高麗 tea bowls, began and continued into the Edo period (17th century to the mid-19th century). During the modern period, the collection expanded to include other items such as Goryeo celadon, *buncheong* ware, and Joseon white porcelain. From the 16th century up to the present, it is without doubt the Japanese who, as foreigners, have consistently highly regarded Korean ceramics. In particular, the so-called Kōrai tea bowls are currently owned by various museums and art museums in Japan including the Nezu Museum, which is also featured in this issue. However, it is the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, that is home to the one of the most complete collections of Goryeo celadon, *buncheong* ware, and Joseon white porcelain.

The core of the collection of the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, is the Korean ceramics of the Ataka Collection and the Rhee Byung-Chang Collection.¹ In the following sections, this article will trace the history of the collection of Korean ceramics in Japan and introduce the Korean ceramics collection of the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka.

From the Medieval Ages to the Modern Times

In East Asia, the Chinese merchants conducted maritime trade along the area connecting Southeast Asia, the Korean peninsula, and Japan between the 9th and 13th centuries. Starting from the late 11th century, they lived in Hakata,

Japan, and it is precisely from the historical ruins of this period that Goryeo celadon started to be excavated in Japan. In China, Xu Jing 徐兢 of Northern Song highly praised the celadon of Goryeo in his book *Gaoli tujing* (*An Illustrated Account of Goryeo* 高麗圖經), which was completed in 1124, and Taiping Laoren 太平老人 of Southern Song wrote in *Xiu zhong jin* (*Brocade in the Sleeve* 袖中錦) that the “jade-colored celadon of Goryeo is the best under heaven” 高麗秘色, 天下第一. In addition, a large number of elaborate shards of Goryeo celadon have been discovered from the ruins of Lin’an city, where the imperial palace once stood. In Kamakura of Japan, there was a boom in Chinese goods during the first half of the 14th century, which included a taste for Goryeo celadon due to its high reputation in Southern Song. Goryeo celadon was in circulation in Japan as well, although during this time, it was mixed among and thus sometimes perceived as Chinese goods. It was only in the 16th century, due to the emergence of Kōrai tea bowls, that the ceramics of the Korean peninsula were clearly recognized to have been produced in the Korean peninsula (Tani 2001, 246).

The first document to mention Korean ceramics is *Sanetaka kō ki* (*Diary of Sanetaka* 実隆公記), the diary of the medieval court noble Sanjōnishi Sanetaka 三条西実隆 (1455–1537), in which he writes on the entry for the 13th of the eleventh lunar month of the third year of Eishō 永正 era (1506) that he received a “Kōrai tea bowl” from a monk (Sanjōnishi 1935, 662; Tani 1998, 24).² Tea masters would often record the tea utensils such as the tea bowls that had been used during a tea ceremony, which were called *chakaiki* (Records of Tea Gatherings 茶会記). The oldest *chakaki* currently surviving is the *Matsuya Kaiki* (*The Matsuya Family’s Records of Tea Gatherings* 松屋会記), which includes records between 1533 and 1650. The entry written for the 12th of the ninth lunar month of the sixth year of Tenbun 天文 era (1537) lists “Kōrai tea bowls,” which is the first time a Korean ceramics appeared in a *chakaki* (Sen et al. 1957, 2). After the name “Mishima tea bowl” appeared in the eighth year of Eiroku 永禄era (1565) as the name of a subtype Kōrai tea bowls (Sen et al. 1959, 118), the names Ido 井戸, Haku-gōrai 白高麗, and Wari-kōdai 割高台 appeared until 1620 (Tani 2001, 116), and in 1628, the name Hakame 刷毛目 emerged (Tani and Sin 2008, 43). During the 16th and 17th centuries, the Japanese perceived

¹ The following are the references for this article. See Hitoshi 2020; Itō 2007; Koezuka 1998; Hayashiya 1976.

² Additionally, this part of the article is an organized and supplemented version of Jung 2020, 2023.

Korean ceramics through these categories and started to use them for their tea gathering.

According to the research of Tani Akira 谷晃, during the premodern period (Edo period, mid-17th to mid-19th centuries), tea bowls made in China gradually went out of use except for exceptional tea gatherings. The percentage of the use of tea bowls during tea gatherings show that the tea bowls made in Japan took up 40 to 60% and tea bowls made in Joseon took up 40 to 50% (Tani 2001, 322). All of these tea bowls made in Joseon were called Kōrai tea bowls, the majority of which were of the Ido type, followed by the Goki 呉器 type and Mishima 三島 type (Tani 2001, 265–69).

The Meiji Restoration of 1868 marked the end of the premodern period, or the Edo period, and ushered in a new era for Japan. Objects ranging from all kinds of art works to tea utensils started to be actively traded in, with transactions reaching its peak during the Taishō era (1912–1926).

It was during this period that the *Taishō meikikan* (*Famous Tea Utensils of the Taishō Period* 大正名器鑑), an eight-volume illustrated guide compiling the results of the investigation of tea masters and famous tea bowls, was published by the *Taishō meikikan* Compilation Office between 1921 and 1927. Among the 428 tea bowls featured in Volumes 6 to 8, the 237 Kōrai tea bowls are the overwhelming majority compared to the 52 Chinese tea bowls and 151 Japanese tea bowls. The high esteem held for Kōrai tea bowls ever since the medieval period thus continued in the art market and the circle of tea masters during then. These Kōrai tea bowls included many of the Mishima type and *kohiki* 粉引 type, which were both ceramics of the early Joseon period called *buncheong* ware. In other words, *buncheong* ware continued to be highly valued as a type of Kōrai tea bowls.

In the modern period, excavation and investigation were carried out in the Shino and Karatsu kilns in Japan and the Cizhou kiln in China, bringing antique ceramics under a new light. The situation surrounding Korean ceramics was even more dramatic. First of all, Goryeo celadon, which had disappeared together with the fall of the Goryeo dynasty and had remained so for a long period of time, suddenly emerged in great quantities as a result of grave thefts and construction for public works such as the railway, leading to their collection and research. In addition, around the mid-1920s, thanks to the educational campaign carried out by the Asakawa brothers—Asakawa Noritaka (1884–1964) and Asakawa Takumi (1891–1931)—together with Yanagi

Munueyoshi (1889–1961), Joseon white porcelain started to be recognized. Finally, *buncheong* ware, which refers to ceramics of the early Joseon dynasty, was newly discovered from the Gyeryongsan Mountain kiln site in Gongju, South Chungcheong Province, around the mid-1920s, and a large number of ceramic shards stolen from the site became greatly popular among Japanese enthusiasts of ceramics.

In the 1930s, the high regard for crafts of the Joseon dynasty including ceramics increased even further, leading to the advent of the so-called Yi dynasty Boom, during which many crafts were taken to Japan. According to one theory, Ataka Eiichi 安宅英一 (1910–1994), the figure at the middle of the formation of the Ataka Collection, developed an interest for ceramics after he was invited to an exhibition of Korea crafts by the Joseon Crafts Society (Chōsen kōgei kai 朝鮮工芸会) in 1934 by Tada Heigorō 田平五郎 of Sumimoto Forestry Co., Ltd., who was also a collector (Koezuka 1998, 153; Kobayashi 2020, 95). If this was indeed the case, Ataka Eiichi also opened his eyes to ceramics during the Yi dynasty Boom of the 1930s.

However, as Japan entered a full-scale war with China in 1937 and began fighting the Pacific War with other countries including the United States and the United Kingdom in 1941, calmly collecting and researching ceramics was no longer possible. In 1945, Japan was defeated in the war.

The Ataka Collection

When the Edo period had come to an end, there had been a shift in the upper class, and many works of art had found their way to new owners. The same phenomenon happened after the end of World War II. The General Headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers (GHQ) did not waste time after the defeat of Japan to dismantle industrial and financial conglomerates (*zaibatsu*), create property tax, and amend the inheritance tax, which led to the rapid decline of the pre-war capitalist class. In this process, many works of art this class had collected and owned ended up in the market (Nagatani 2011, 69–78). A typical example is the collection of Masuda Takashi 益田孝 (1848–1938), the business leader who built the foundation of the Mitsui Group. The vast collection of this figure, who was an important modern Japan collector of antique art and a central figure among modern tea masters, is said to



Figure 1. Pillow, *Celadon with Carved Design of Paired Cranes* 青磁陽刻 双鶴文 枕, Goryeo dynasty, 12th century, gift of Sumitomo Group (The Ataka Collection)



Figure 2. *Inscription on the Lid of the Inner Storage Box* 内蓋表面の箱書き

have scattered and become lost during this period after the war (Tanako 1981, 41–51). One of them is the *Celadon with Carved Design of Paired Cranes*, which later became part of the Ataka Collection (Figure 1). Originally passed down in the Hōshūnin Temple, a sub-temple of Daitokuji Temple in Kyoto, the outer storage box of the pillow is inscribed with the characters “7th Year of Enpō” 延宝, which corresponds to 1679, and the inscription on the lid of the inner storage box reads “Celadon Pillow Vase” 青磁枕花入 and “Gyokushitsu” 玉室 (Figure 2).³ This piece, which was regarded as Chinese goods and circulated in Japan, is extremely valuable as one of the few pieces of Goryeo celadon to have been passed down for generations in Japan.

The Ataka Collection, which was part of the projects carried out by the Ataka & Co. Ltd., started to take shape precisely around this period. Ataka Trading Company, which was founded in 1904 by Ataka Yakichi 安宅弥吉 (1873–1949), was able to continue the business even after the war and soon grew to become Ataka & Co. Ltd., a general trading company representing Japan. It was Ataka Eiichi 英一氏 (1901–1994), the eldest son of Ataka Yakichi,

³ Daitokuji Temple is a representative temple of Kyoto and was built in the early 14th century. Hōshūnin Temple, one of its smaller subtemples, was built in 1608 by Matsu 松 (1547–1617), the wife of Maeda Toshiie 前田利家 (1538–1599), a military commander during the Azuchi-Momoyama period (1573–1598), to welcome Gyokushitsu Sōhaku 玉室宗珀和尚 (1572–1641).

who led the efforts to build the Ataka Collection.

While Ataka Eiichi first started the collection as a company project with the works of the Japanese artist Hayami Gyoshū 速水御舟 (1894–1935), he quickly moved to collecting ceramics in 1951. The first item he collected was the *Buncheong Ware with Flowering Plant Design Painted in Underglaze Iron Brown on a Kohiki (Overall White-slip-coated) Ground* from the Joseon dynasty.

This piece is small, cream-colored, simple bottle measuring 17.5 cm tall on which a plain floral plant design has been drawn with iron paint (Figure 3). The 20 pieces that were acquired during the first stage of the collection (initial period, 1951–1953), with the exception of the *Three-Color Bottle with Engraved Floral Design* from the Jin dynasty, China, are all Korean ceramics, and many of them are plain yet rich in nuance. This was the aesthetics that formed the starting point of the collection.



Figure 3. Bottle, *Buncheong Ware with Flowering Plant Design Painted in Underglaze Iron Brown on a Kohiki (Overall White-slip-coated) Ground* 粉青粉引鉄絵 草花文 瓶, Joseon dynasty, second half of 15th century–16th century, gift of Sumitomo Group (The Ataka Collection)

The second stage (developmental period, 1954–1965) was also centered on Korean ceramics and included 102 Korean ceramics and 20 Chinese ceramics. The collection acquired masterpieces, one after another, during this time. These include the *Celadon Plaque with Inlaid Design of Six Cranes* in 1954, the *Celadon Water Dropper in the Shape of a Girl* (Important Art Object) in 1955, the *Celadon Square Incense Burner with Impressed Kui Dragon Design* (Important Art Object) and *Buncheong Ware Bottle with Overall Slip-Coating* in 1956, the *Celadon Ewer with Inlaid Design of Boys and Baoxinghua Scroll* (Important Cultural Property) in 1957, and the *Blue-and-white Porcelain Beveled*

Jar with Floral Plant Design and the *White Porcelain Flowerpot Stand with Openwork Lotus Design* in 1958.

Ataka Eiichi took a long time to carefully prepare for the acquisition of each work. For example, in the case of the *White Porcelain with Openwork Lotus Design* (Figure 4), he first hired the second son of the owner of the piece at Ataka & Co., Ltd. and warmly welcomed him, frequently inviting him to musical concerts or dinner. He would sound out the right timing for suggestion and took a couple of years for the owner to readily consent to transfer the piece. In addition, he would sometimes hang the photographs or plates of the items he wanted to acquire in front of his bedroom. In fact, he did so for several years in the case of the *Blue-and-white Porcelain with Floral Plant Design* (Figure 5) he purchased in 1961.

The third stage (maturity period, 1966–1975) was when Japan entered a period of rapid economic growth. Ataka & Co., Ltd. also greatly expanded its business, and the collection of Chinese ceramics was enriched all at once. These included the famous works such as *Celadon Bottle with Iron Brown Spots*

(National Treasure), *Stoneware Tea Bowl with “Oil Spots” and Iridescent Luster on Tenmoku Glaze* (National Treasure), and the *Celadon Narcissus Basin*. Around 1967, Ataka Eiichi (2007, 224) wrote in an article titled “Antique Art” that “While I have been attracted to the *wabi-sabi* of the ceramics of Goryeo and the Yi dynasty for a long time, recently, I have been captivated by the neat and orderly Chinese ceramics as well, and I am making efforts, although modest, to collect them.” His interests seem to have spread to Chinese ware during this period as well.

Itō Ikutarō 伊藤郁太郎 (2007, 201), who collected antique ceramics under the guidance of Ataka Eiichi for a long time and later became the first director of the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, once described the aesthetics of Ataka Eiichi as disliking “items that were too obviously contrived in their embellishment” and instead preferring “items that were honest and natural.” This is likely the basic sentiment underlying his collection of Korean and Chinese ceramics as well as one of the reasons he did not attempt to collect the Chinese ceramics of the Qing dynasty.

The masterpieces of Korean ceramics that he acquired during this period include the *Celadon Pillow with Stand in the Shape of Two Lions*, the *Long-Necked Celadon Vase with Carved Peony and Lotus Design*, the *Long-Necked Celadon Vase with Peony Design in Inlay and Underglaze Copper-Red Paint*, and the *Blue-and-white Porcelain Jar Named Shinchū with Plum and Bamboo Design*.

Ataka Eiichi’s collecting activities ended in 1975, when the management crisis of the company became apparent, which makes the following year, 1976, the fourth stage (final period) of the collection. During this time, he paid off the arrears he owed to antique art dealers and brought back pieces that had been moved to subsidiary companies. Ataka & Co., Ltd. virtually went bankrupt in 1977 after the failure of overseas investment.

Although there were concerns that the ceramics collection would scatter and become lost, Sumitomo Group, including Sumitomo Bank, the primary bank of Ataka & Co., Ltd., saw to it that the collection was donated to the City of Osaka. The structure built exclusively to accommodate this collection became the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, and opened in November 1982. The Ataka Collection consists of a total of 965 pieces, comprising 793 Korean ceramics (4 from United Silla, 304 from the Goryeo dynasty, and 485 from the Joseon dynasty), 144 Chinese ceramics, 5 Vietnamese ceramics, 2 Japanese ceramics, 5 Chinese craftworks, 10 Korean craftworks, and 6 Japanese



Figure 4. Flowerpot stand, *White Porcelain with Openwork Lotus Design* 白磁透彫蓮花文盆台, Joseon dynasty, 16th century, gift of Sumitomo Group (The Ataka Collection)



Figure 5. Beveled bottle, *Blue-and-white Porcelain with Floral Plant Design* 青花草花文面取瓶, Joseon dynasty, first half of the 18th century, gift of SUMITOMO Group (The ATAKA Collection)

craftworks or other material.

The Korean ceramics of the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, which is based on the Ataka Collection, is currently divided into three exhibition rooms: Goryeo Dynasty and Joseon Dynasty; *Buncheong* Ware and Joseon Dynasty; and Porcelain. Depending on the technique and period, Exhibition Room 2 features undecorated celadon, celadon with inlaid decorations, underglaze iron-brown paint, black-glazed ware, and white porcelain. Exhibition Room 3 features *buncheong* inlay and those with line engravings, scrapings, brush marks, slip-coating (*kobiki*), underglaze iron-brown paint, and underglaze iron-brown slip-coating. Exhibition Room 4 features white porcelain, blue-and-white porcelain, those decorated with underglaze iron-brown paint, underglaze copper-red paint, and black-glazed ware. The items are well organized by these categories and systematically displayed. Not only does this collection roughly encompass the entire history of Korean ceramics, from the Goryeo dynasty to the Joseon dynasty, but they also allow the viewer to trace this history by observing excellent masterpieces. The Korean ceramics of the Ataka Collection is thus characterized by the long timeframe it covers, the diversity of the pieces within each period, and the superb quality of each piece.

The Rhee Byung-Chang Collection

In 1999, the museum added the new building to exhibit the newly acquired Rhee Byung-Chang Collection as well as Japanese ceramics and other works. One of the exhibition rooms displays the Korean Ceramics of the Rhee Byung-Chang Collection.

Dr. Rhee Byung-Chang 李秉昌 (1915–2005) was born in Iksan, North Jeolla Province, Korea. He went to Japan in 1949 as a diplomat, where he pursued his studies at Tohoku University and received a doctorate in economics while also carrying out various projects in Japan as a businessman. The first Korean ceramics he acquired is said to be the *White Porcelain* (Figure 6). Starting from 1965, after encountering an antique ceramic from his homeland in Japan, he set out to collect Korean ceramics located throughout Japan and, during the rest of his lifetime, built one of the most prominent personal collection of Korean ceramics in the world.



Figure 6. Jar, *White Porcelain* 白磁壺, Joseon dynasty, late 17th century–early 18th century, gift of Dr. Rhee Byung-Chang

In 1978, he published the *Kankoku bijutsu shuusen* (*Selections of Korean Art* 韓国美術蒐選) from the University of Tokyo Press. This massive text of three volumes amounting to 1,160 pages selected and featured a total of 888 representative masterpieces of Korean ceramics from collections in Korea, Japan, Europe, and the United States along with explanations. Carefully and luxuriously bound, it was a great, ground-breaking catalogue of Korean ceramics. The editing work was done by Itō Ikutarō. Although Dr. Rhee Byung-Chang barely spoke of himself, it is said that he only purchased Korean ceramics from countries besides Korea, such as Japan, Europe, the United States, or Hong Kong, due to his belief that Korean ceramics in his homeland, Korea, belonged where they already were. When compiling the text, he gathered thousands of positive films of Korean ceramics scattered all over the world and considered their layout, the enthusiasm of which moved Itō Ikutarō, who took on the job of editing. At his own expense, Dr. Rhee also re-photographed all of the featured items, meticulously planned the layout, and after having the volumes bound in a magnificent cover, donated copies of the book to museums and art galleries around the world in order let people learn of the cultural heritage of Korean ceramics and strongly appeal the existence of Korea to the world. It would not

be an exaggeration to say that the widespread recognition of Korean ceramics across the world is largely due to this book (Itō 1998, 10).

Dr. Rhee Byung-Chang also hoped that he could return the Korean ceramics in his collection to his homeland. After much thought, however, and due to several circumstances, he ultimately donated them to the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka. By letting the exquisite cultural artifacts of Korea remain in Japan, his hope was that they would be a source of courage and pride for the Korean residents in Japan and their grandchildren towards the culture of their homeland. This is how the 301 works of Korean ceramics and 50 works of Chinese ceramics, which Dr. Rhee had collected as material for comparative research on Korean ceramics, were donated to the museum between 1996 and 1998. Needless to say, the museum, which already possessed the Ataka Collection, became even more complete thanks to the collection donated by Dr. Rhee. It had also been Dr. Rhee's wish that the synergistic effect created with the Ataka Collection would help disseminate Korea ceramics around the world. Dr. Rhee also donated the land (263.83 m²) and building in Minato Ward, Tokyo, where he lived for a long time, and the fund based on them has been and continues to be used for open lectures held in commemoration of Dr. Rhee Byung-Chang, which are held by inviting researchers inside and outside of Japan. A portion of the fund from the sale of the land and building has also enabled the repair of the Entrance Hall and Café of the museum between February 2022 and March 2024.

The Korean ceramics of the Rhee Byung-Chang Collection are made up of 1 piece from the Three Kingdoms period, 2 from Unified Silla, 65 from the Goryeo dynasty, and 233 from the Joseon dynasty. In particular, the ceramics of the Goryeo and Joseon dynasties both encompass all of the types and decoration techniques of ceramics, forming an extraordinarily systematic collection, similar to the Ataka Collection. Another feature of the collection is its carefully selected masterpieces.

Among the particularly valuable pieces, the *Celadon with Incised Peony Design* (Figure 7) and the *Celadon with Inlaid Cloud and Crane Design* (Figure 8) express the quintessence of Goryeo celadon. The deep, grayish, blue-green color of the glaze emits a fine jade green luster, which has made them known as representative pieces of jade-green celadon. The *Celadon with Inlaid Cloud and Crane Design* is extremely beautiful, making showing culmination of refinement in the art of inlay technique. The *Buncheong Ware with Inlaid Lotus*



Figure 7. Lobed dish, *Celadon with Incised Peony Design* 青磁陰刻 牡丹文 輪花形盤, Goryeo dynasty, first half of the 12th century, gift of Dr. Rhee Byung-Chang



Figure 8. Bowl, *Celadon with Inlaid Cloud and Crane Design* 青磁象嵌 雲鶴文 碗, Goryeo dynasty, 12th century, gift of Dr. Rhee Byung-Chang

Design (Figure 9) is a masterpiece that represents the *buncheong* ware. The lotus motif on the unique composition of the design as well as the beautiful color of the glaze, despite its small size, has earned it the designation of an Important Art Object in Japan. The largest attraction of *buncheong* ware lies in the wide variety and free and natural expression of its design. An excellent example is the



Figure 9. Horn-shaped cup, *Buncheong Ware with Inlaid Lotus Design* 粉青象嵌 蓮花文 角杯, Joseon dynasty, first half of the 15th century, gift of Dr. Rhee Byung-Chang



Figure 10. Bottle, *Buncheong Ware with Inlaid Birds and Fish Design* 粉青象嵌 鳥魚文 瓶, Joseon dynasty, first half of the 15th century, gift of Dr. Rhee Byung-Chang

Buncheong Ware with Inlaid Birds and Fish Design (Figure 10). The body of this piece is decorated with the underwater scene of fish, herons, and ducks by using perspective to give depth, opening up a rich and diverse world.

The *White Porcelain with Iron-Paint Coating* (Figure 11), which presents

an impressive contrast between white and black, is an unprecedented, valuable item. The *Porcelain with Bird and Plum Tree Design Painted in Underglaze Iron Brown* (Figure 12) is unique in its shape and color, making it a rare example of its kind.



Figure 11. Jar, *White Porcelain with Iron-paint Coating* 白磁鉄地 壺, Joseon dynasty, 15th century–16th century, gift of Dr. Rhee Byung-Chang



Figure 12. Jar, *Porcelain with Bird and Plum Tree Design Painted in Underglaze Iron Brown* 鉄砂 梅鳥文 壺, Joseon dynasty, second half of the 17th century, gift of Dr. Rhee Byung-Chang

Masterpieces of the Korean Ceramic Owned by the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka: Masterpieces Attract Masterpieces

Nezu Kaichirō 根津嘉一郎 (1860–1940), who laid the groundwork for the Nezu Museum, is one of representative modern Japanese businessmen who were also tea masters, such as the aforementioned Masuda Takashi. For this reason, it is no wonder that the collection at Nezu Museum includes many masterpieces of the Kōrai tea bowls, which were traditionally used during the tea ceremony. However, Ataka Eiichi allegedly did not show any interest in the tea ceremony, and in fact, there are only three Kōrai tea bowls in the Ataka Collection. The Rhee Byung-Chang Collection has none. Ceramics, for Ataka Eiichi and Dr. Rhee Byung-Chang, were not objects to use but works of art they had begun collecting in order to appreciate and enjoy. This aesthetics were based on the “ceramics to appreciate” (*kanshō toki* 鑑賞陶器) way of thinking that emerged since the modern period.

Before the modern period, all ceramics, be it tea bowls, vases, or expensive items, were primarily objects to use and were indeed used in real life particularly during tea gatherings. This perception continued even during the modern period, and the Asakawa brothers and Yanagi Muneyoshi, who were pioneers in the high regard of Joseon white porcelain, believed ceramics were for use and did not separate use and beauty 美.

Slightly before the Asakawa brothers and Yanagi Muneyoshi were active, however, a movement emerged from the stance that sought to view ceramics mainly as objects to appreciate, akin to the way paintings and sculptures were appreciated as pure works of art. In 1914, the Research Society of Ceramics (Tōjiki kenkyūkai 陶磁器研究会) was founded, led by the figures of the Tokyo Imperial University (currently, University of Tokyo) such as Ōkōchi Masatoshi 大河内正敏 (1878–1952) and Okuda Seiichi 奥田誠一 (1883–1955), and, the Saikokai 彩壺会 was born from this society in 1916. As Ōkōchi’s words, “Ceramics should primarily be appreciated as a hobby or a source of inspiration, either as crafts or works of art,” show (Saikokai 1916, 6), he believed in viewing ceramics from an aesthetic perspective. The ceramics enjoyed by this standpoint were called “ceramics to appreciate.” In this sense, the Ataka Collection adheres to this “principle of perfect masterpieces” (Kobayashi 1999, 20–27).

The pieces that symbolize these masterpieces in the Ataka Collection are the items that used to be in the possession of many connoisseurs. These include

figures who were renowned as collectors of Korean ceramics before the war including Asakawa Noritaka, Asakawa Takumi, Yanagi Muneyoshi, Akaboshi Gorō 赤星五郎 (1897–1966), Yagi Masaharu 八木正治, and the Munmyeong Shop by Yi Hwiseop 李禧燮, an antique art dealer in Keijō.

For instance, when Yanagi Muneyoshi visited Keijō in May 1920, he laid his eyes on the *Porcelain with Lotus Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue and Copper-red Paint* (Figure 13) for the first time in Asakawa Takumi’s house. And he wrote in his diary that “I have been struck by a feeling that I have never experienced before” and that “Everything is like a dream,” not concealing his amazement at how wonderful it was (Yanagi 1984, 65–66). This jar traveled through the hands of Asakawa Noritaka, Akaboshi Gorō, and Mayuyama & Co., Ltd., reached the hands of Ataka Eiichi, and was finally donated to the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka.

The Munmyeong Shop held seven exhibition-and-sale events of Korean antique arts and crafts between 1934 and 1941 in Tokyo and Osaka, bringing many craftworks to Japan. In the event held in 1941, the *Blue-and-white Porcelain with Floral Plant Design* (Figure 14), which Yanagi Muneyoshi (1988,



Figure 13. Jar, *Porcelain with Lotus Design in Underglaze Cobalt-blue and Copper-red Paint* 青花辰砂蓮花文壺, Joseon dynasty, second half of the 18th century, gift of Mr. Ataka Eiichi

44) regarded to be exquisitely beautiful as the “autumn-grasses style jar,” was displayed. This jar used to be in the possession of Asakawa Takumi, and after passing through the hands of the Munmyong Shop, Inoue Kōichi, and after the war, Mayayuma & Co., Ltd., it joined the Ataka Collection. In fact, there



Figure 14. Beveled jar, *Blue-and-white Porcelain with Floral Plant Design* 青花 窓絵草花文 面取壺, Joseon dynasty, first half of the 18th century, gift of Mr. Ataka Teruya



Figure 15. Beveled jar, *Blue-and-white Porcelain with Floral Plant Design* 青花 窓絵草花文 面取壺, Joseon dynasty, first half of the 18th century, gift of Sumitomo Group (The Ataka Collection)

is another *Blue-and-white Porcelain with Floral Plant Design* (Figure 15), which was discovered by the tenacity of Hirota Hiroshi 広田熙 of Kochūkyo Gallery and remained under the possession of Iwasaki Koyata of the Mitsubishi Group family. After negotiations that were carried out over a long period of time, Ataka successfully acquired it at an unbelievably high price for its time.

Yagi Masaharu lived in Keijō before the war and was a large landowner who was known as a collector of Korean ceramics. The Ataka Collection also acquired the *White with Openwork Lotus Design* (Figure 4) and *Buncheong Ware Ritual Vessel with Overall Slip-coating*, which were formerly in his possession.

The “ceramics to appreciate” standpoint penetrates the Rhee Byung-Chang Collection, which is “a collection that compact yet consistently pursues perfection by selecting examples of high artistic value” (Itō 1999, 20).

Conclusion

Ever since the 16th century, the tea masters of Japan have developed the tea ceremony as they gathered the so-called Kōrai tea bowls including *buncheong* ware. Their high regard of Korean ceramics continued from the Edo period to the modern period onward, and in the 19th century, this grew to include Goryeo celadon, and later, during the early 20th century, Joseon white porcelain and *buncheong* ware as well. The collection of the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka, which systematically houses the Korean ceramics that were newly discovered since the modern period, particularly those regarded as masterpieces, may well be called the destination at which converges the love and collection of Korean ceramics by the Japanese since the 16th century.

At the same time, it cannot be overlooked how the shape of this love and collection of ceramics have greatly changed over time since the modern period up to the present. Works of art and craft were primarily objects to be used. The modern tea masters were clear on this stance, and even Yanagi Muneyoshi, who proposed the new value of folk art into the area of arts and crafts, did not separate beauty with use. As the Western concept of art came into Japan after the modern period, however, the movement to view art purely from an artistic viewpoint arose, particularly in the area of ceramics. Ataka Eiichi and Dr. Rhee Byung-Chung clearly regarded works of art from a stance of appreciation and did not show any interest in the tea ceremony.

Moreover, in the cases of Ataka Eiichi and Dr. Rhee Byung-Chang, it is said that they did not even place works of art in everyday living space.⁴ Where did they place them? When the collection of art began as a project of the Ataka & Co., Ltd. in 1951, it was for the purpose of the “collection, preservation, and research of works of art” as well as “to return corporate profits to the society and enhance the cultural knowledge of the employees” (Itō 2007, 19). However, in 1967, which is during the third stage, or the maturity period, of the Ataka Collection, the Nihon Keizai Shimbun company held the sixth “Art Exhibition of Beauty” 美の美展 (Bi no biten), to which the collection submitted works of art and continued to open the collection to the public, mainly through displays in department stores, across seven occasions. By 1972, during the Exhibition of the Chinese Ceramics of the Ataka Collection that was held in Osaka, the company president said during his opening remarks that together with their efforts to preserve “fine works of antique art they feared would be scattered and lost,” they also “strove to have them widely appreciated by the general public” (Ichikawa 1972, 1).

Before the modern period, works of art were usually treasured by individuals with power and wealth. After the Meiji Restoration, however, institutions such as museums and art museums were built and all kinds of exhibitions were held, during which works of art started to take on the meaning as public assets. After the war, the construction of art museums picked up steam. The present article has reviewed the Korean ceramics collection of the Museum of Oriental Ceramics, Osaka. This collection is one of the most complete collections of carefully selected, excellent works of ceramics outside of Korea both in terms of quality and quantity. While inheriting the tastes and preferences of the Japanese since the 16th century, it is also specialized in the aspect of the appreciation of works of art and craft as distinct from their use. As public assets, the collection is rare in that works of art have been made open to the public under the most ideal exhibition environment that pursues the appreciation of art.

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4 Based on the testimony of Dr. Rhee Byung-Chang’s daughter. For this, see Itō 2007, 123; 2007, 158.

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