



LITTLE BOOKS ON ART

THE ARTS
OF JAPAN

EDWARD DILLON

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INSTITUTION

280

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LITTLE BOOKS ON ART

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THE ARTS OF JAPAN

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THE
ARTS OF JAPAN

BY
EDWARD DILLON, M.A.

WITH FORTY-ONE ILLUSTRATIONS

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P R E F A C E

IN this little book I have attempted to summarise the vast amount of information upon the Art of Japan that has lately become available, much of it from native sources. This I have supplemented with some recollections of a former residence in the country.

I am indebted, above all, to such works as Captain Brinkley's recently published book on Japan, to the studies on Japanese art by Mr. Arthur Morrison, that appeared lately in the *Monthly Review*, to the vast wealth of information contained in Sir Ernest Satow's *Guide-book to Japan*, to the notices appended to the reproductions of Japanese art in Tajima and in the Kokkwa; finally, to papers that have appeared from time to time in the Journals of the Asiatic Society of Japan and of the Japan Society of London. It is to such works as these that the serious student of Japanese art must turn. To have put him on the right path is all that I can claim.

My thanks are due to Mr. Bing for permission to reproduce some photographs from the Catalogue of the Hayashi sale.

E. D.

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NOTE

In pronouncing Japanese words the consonants are sounded as in English, the vowels as in Italian.

THE ARTS OF JAPAN

INTRODUCTORY

*Shikishima no
Yamato gokoro wo
Hito towaba
Asa hi ni niwō
Yama-zakura bana.*

Moto-ori, Eighteenth Century

Should one ask, What is the very spirit of Yamato?
Tell him, It is as the perfume of the wild cherry-blossom
in the morning sun.

THE gulf that divides our western mind from that of the Japanese is a deep one, scarcely to be bridged even by one who, with the aid of natural gifts of sympathy, should devote many years to the study of the Japanese character. That this is so, we can see in the case of the late Lafcadio Hearn. Love and admiration for the people among whom he had lived so long, led him shortly before his death to become a subject of the Mikado. But to the end Hearn was conscious that in the minds of even his most intimate friends there was something that prevented a complete bond of union.

So when we read of the heroic deeds, of the personal

sacrifices, that have in the past as in the present played so prominent a part in Japanese history, however much our admiration may be stirred, and even our sympathy excited, we feel more often than not, that the motives that have ostensibly led on to these deeds, are, to our seeming, strangely incongruous, if not absolutely grotesque. For some such reason it is that the history of the Japanese people, and in a still greater measure their literature, can never be a popular study with us: there is something exotic and apart in both.

That in spite of this want of mutual understanding between the mind of the West and that of the Far East, the art of the Japanese should have been received with so much enthusiasm among us is surely a significant fact. It is at any rate a tribute to the deeply seated nature of the æsthetic instinct. At the same time this aloofness of the Japanese mind should stand as a warning to us, that in approaching the subject of Japanese art we must be prepared to find much that we cannot expect to understand at the first glance. Above all, we must not take the popular verdict of the West as to what is good and what is bad in this art as in any way a final one.

Of the various influences that during the course of two thousand years have aided in fixing the mental standpoint and the moral character of the Japanese, some, though all-penetrating, appear at first sight to have had little direct influence on their art. Nothing is more characteristic of the people than the extraordinary strength of the family tie, the iron rule that

teaches the absolute necessity of self-sacrifice in the interests, in the first place, of the family, then of the tribe, as represented in later times by the feudal lord, and finally of the country—the latter call summed up in an unquestioning devotion to the emperor, the descendant of the gods, and a god himself. The Chinese system of morals, founded, we may say, on ‘filial piety’ and the worship of ancestors, is but another aspect of the same principle, and we may find in it a natural link of sympathy between the two peoples.

But moral principles of this character, however fundamental, can only have indirectly influenced the art of the country. Some such conceptions have no doubt aided in governing the relations between the master and the pupil—the two have long stood to one another in the position of father and son. But, on the other hand, it would seem that not unfrequently the less docile spirits among the Japanese have found in the world of art an escape from the iron discipline that hemmed in their domestic and political life. The artistic temperament has at all times been apt to rebel against the hard world of fact and the narrow limits of the moral law, and we shall see in the sequel that the Bohemian type of character has not been wanting among the artists of Japan.

But the art of the Japanese has been dominated by influences and motives of a more obvious character. Some of these we must now consider.

There is no necessity to dwell upon the appreciation

of natural scenery by the Japanese: their love for mountain and forest, for water in every form—rain and snow, river, waterfall, lake or land-locked sea; nor, again, upon their interest in flowers—this almost amounts to a worship. What I would call attention to is the important part that motion plays in their rendering of nature. The wind that bends the trees and scatters their leaves or blossom, that fills the bellying sails of the junks, and against which the pilgrim struggles as he plods along the winding mountain path, the stream that dashes through a rocky bed or falls in a cascade, the driving rain or mist—these are the prime factors of a Japanese landscape. So of the living element, in this again it is the expression of vitality and of motion that is aimed at. No other people have so thoroughly mastered the flight of birds, nor, in spite at times of opposing tendencies, have so delighted in the various activities of man. The dynamic in their art tends to prevail over the static elements. A Japanese would sympathise with the landscapes of Salvator or of Gaspar Poussin rather than with the tranquil canvases of Claude Lorraine.

And this, in spite of the teaching of the Buddhist religion that has so profoundly influenced Japanese art. This art was indeed at the beginning but a vehicle for the teaching of the new religion. Nothing could, it would seem, be more 'static' than the conventional rendering of a Buddhist saint, and there was little in the doctrine to favour the native tendency for movement and energy. But as time went on a means

was found to circumvent this Indian spirit of the Nirvana. The adventures of the Buddhist priest as missionary or reformer are portrayed in the long temple rolls; here was opportunity enough for depicting the busy life of the day. Or, again, to turn to another school, the calm abstraction of the recluse is contrasted with the changing aspects of his mountain retreat as influenced by wind and weather.

Of all the problems that confront us when we come to look into the long story of Japanese art, there is none more pressing than the relation of this art to that of the Chinese. The general tendency of the European collector of Japanese pictures and 'curios' has been to throw aside all that is obviously of Chinese origin, with the result that an all-important department of Japanese art is almost unrepresented in our western collections. It is true that later research has shown that much of what the average collector has hitherto accepted as of purely Japanese origin must now be recognised as influenced in greater or less degree by the older art of the Middle Kingdom. So that at times a doubt has indeed arisen whether such a thing as a really native art has ever existed in Japan. But such a suspicion may be dismissed at once. In spite of successive waves of dominant Chinese influence of which the first, if it was indeed the first, reached Japan as early as the seventh century of our era, and the last as late as the beginning of the nineteenth, the native artist has always preserved, even when working from Chinese models, a lightness of hand and an exuberance of fancy that dis-

tinguish him from his continental masters. At the same time he has rarely been able to reproduce a certain commanding dignity, a profundity of conception, to be found in the paintings of some of the early Chinese masters. So in later days a notable richness and depth of colouring distinguishes the Ming artists from their Japanese imitators.

The fact is, that the student of the early art of Japan is apt to be tempted aside by the glimpses that in the course of his researches he obtains of the earlier and stronger art of China. The names of the Tang and the Sung dynasties are not just now words to conjure with, even in artistic circles. But I think that before long these epochs will become at least as familiar to us as, say, those of the Sassanian rulers in Persia or of the Abbaside caliphs. What we know indeed of these grand old schools of China, of the artists who worked from the seventh to the fourteenth century in the central part of the land, is derived almost entirely from works of art long preserved in Japan collections, above all in the temples and monasteries of Nara and Kioto. It thus happens that in the course of recent investigations into the early monuments of Japanese art—of these I shall have more to say in a subsequent chapter—a completely new light has been thrown upon the arts of painting and sculpture in the Middle Kingdom during the most memorable periods of their development.

The influence of China upon the civilisation of Japan has often been compared with that of Rome upon



SAKIA-MUNI DESCENDING FROM THE MOUNTAIN
Twelfth Century. By the Chinese artist Liang Chi

Western Europe, and there are indeed many curious coincidences between the two. Again, just as with us, beyond the seats of classical culture, lies the land in which our Christian religion had its origin, in like manner the Japanese found in distant India, far beyond the Middle Kingdom, the source of their religion, and in this case, in a measure, of their art also. Here, indeed, in north-western Hindustan, the two worlds met. For the Buddhist art that the early Chinese pilgrims carried back with them to the Far East was still in a measure under the influence of the Greek civilisation that had been introduced many years before by the successors of Alexander the Great. A faint echo of the Hellenistic art of the third century before our era may be found in many an old idol preserved in the gloomy recesses of a Japanese temple.

Of the more important of these successive waves of Chinese influence I shall have to speak in the sequel: they form indeed, in some cases, good dividing-lines in the history of Japanese art. But here I must, without further delay, call attention to one art that Japan received from China along with the Buddhist religion, an art that has in both countries profoundly influenced the technique not only of painting, but in a measure of sculpture also, and even of certain of the minor arts. I refer, of course, to the art of the calligraphist. Just as the continuous use of the ideograph has affected most intimately the working of the native intellect, both in China and in Japan, so, in perhaps even greater measure, the manual dexterity attained so early in life

by the use of the brush with which these ideographs are written, has profoundly influenced the handling and methods of expression of the artist. So much is this the case that in both countries the art of painting is often regarded as but a branch of calligraphy, and certain methods of classification, depending upon the nature of the brush strokes, are common to both arts. In this we have a typical instance of the wide gulf between the canons of criticism in the West and in the East. The complete mastery and consistent use by the painter of a definite style of brush-work—and the number of these styles is legion—is the *sine quâ non* of which the absence is fatal to his claim to a high position in the world of art in Japan.

Here, indeed, we come into relation with a matter that is of primary importance for the right understanding and appreciation of Japanese art. What the Japanese connoisseur looks for above all else in examining a painting, a piece of sculpture, or even the chased surface of an example of metal-work, is the trace of the living hand of the master. It is only when the artist has attained to complete mastery of his craft, when his hand works freely and surely, when, above all, the muscular action answers directly to the call of the artistic consciousness—some would say of the soul—without any laborious direction being given to the individual stroke, that the craftsman can lay claim to the title of master. Then, and not till then—and this, provided only that he has the right stuff within him and is at heart an artist—can he, in the estimation of

a cultured Japanese, give full expression to his genius. This conception governs the whole training not only of the painter, but of the craftsman generally. It is an idea that is intimately mixed up in the native mind with certain esoteric teachings of the Buddhist religion, especially with those of the Zen sect. Of this there will be more to say in the sequel. For the present I will confine myself to accentuating the fact that in Japan a general principle of this kind has not only long influenced the training of the artist in the narrower sense of the word, but that it is held that the mastery of such arts as fencing or archery can only be attained on similar conditions. This is indeed a point of view that presents itself again and again in what may be called the native criticism of life.

I propose in the first part of this book to take a rapid survey of the art of Japan—especially of the painting and sculpture—treating of it in connection with the leading events in the history of the country. It would indeed be impossible within my allotted space to attempt even a summary history of Japanese painting and sculpture. Moreover, I think that what is required of me in dealing with the 'Arts of Japan' is rather an account of the minor arts, and more especially of the later developments of these arts. I feel, however, strongly the impossibility of any real appreciation and understanding of these minor arts without some previous acquaintance, however slight, with the history of the country in which they were practised, and again with the various schools of painting

and sculpture that have supplied the designs and governed the style of the craftsmen—lacquerers, metal-workers, embroiderers, or what not. So, on the other hand, in this general preliminary sketch it will not be possible to avoid occasional references to these minor arts themselves.

Indeed a cross division, historical and general in the first place, then a technical one to follow, is on the whole the most convenient and the most instructive way of treating of the art productions of a country. It will be my endeavour, as far as my materials allow, to keep in touch with the Japanese point of view in describing and criticising the art of the country; and if it is not possible to look upon this art with the eyes of a Japanese, at least to maintain a sympathetic attitude towards the canons of native criticism.

Written descriptions of works of art and disquisitions upon their merits and demerits are of little value except in presence of the works themselves. There is, however, a total absence of any systematic representation of Japanese art in our national collections. A large collection of books and drawings may be found in the Print Room and the Library of the British Museum, but these are not in practice very accessible to the general public. At South Kensington again, although the Japanese books and coloured prints are well arranged, the collection is not strong in the earlier schools. As for the Japanese objects of art exhibited in the oriental galleries, there are indeed

many beautiful things to be found there, but these are swamped by the juxtaposition of others utterly unworthy of a place in a public museum. The result is that the general impression given is deplorable, and this is the more noticeable when one passes from the admirably arranged and carefully selected examples of Arab and Persian art in the adjacent galleries. Here we have evidence of a loving care that we look for in vain in the Japanese department.

There are in English collections, public and private, but few monuments of the older art of Japan. The rare examples that have left the land of their origin have found a home in German or American collections, above all in Paris. Nor even in the country itself is it always easy to obtain admission to the treasure-houses of the old temples where so many fine objects are preserved, still less to the private collections of noble families and rich merchants. In Japan, the danger from fire necessitates the storing of all objects of value in fire-proof buildings, where they are naturally difficult of access. It is true that of late years an important collection of antiquities and objects of art has been brought together in the National Museum in the Uyeno Park at Tokio. Again, many notable examples of the old art have been extracted from the temples of Nara and Kioto, and 'presented' to what is officially known as the Imperial Household. A collection of surpassing interest must thus have been brought together, but how far at the present time it is accessible to the public I do not know.

In this connection it should be mentioned that some years ago a commission was appointed by the Government to examine the historical and artistic treasures—gorgeous hanging scrolls of Buddhist saints, carved images of gods and priests, precious examples of old lacquer and metal work—that had accumulated in the course of more than a thousand years in the temples of the various Buddhist sects. All objects of interest, artistically or historically, were entered in a Government schedule, and their owners or guardians were forbidden to part with them. This step was taken none too soon. Under the stress of hard times and the prospect of confiscation, a gradual leakage was taking place. What has happened in Italy was being repeated in Japan, and a similar remedy was no doubt necessary. At the same time every facility has been given for the reproduction by photography or otherwise of these precious relics. The result for the history of the art of Japan has been revolutionary. The venerable traditions handed down by the official schools of art, and repeated in the works of the Japanese Vasaris, received many a rude shock. As in the case of the art of Italy, the confrontation and comparison of the monuments themselves, to say nothing of the aid given by photographic reproductions, has brought it about that the history of Japanese art has had (or rather, perhaps, will have) to be in great measure rewritten. At the same time important sidelights, as I have already hinted, have been thrown upon the history of the mother-art of China.

It would seem from all this that the student of Japanese art in this country can find scanty opportunity of benefiting by these new sources of enlightenment. But, fortunately for him, some enterprising publishers in Tokio and in Kioto, with the assistance and the advice of native connoisseurs, have within the last few years issued a series of reproductions—both photographs and coloured wood-prints—of the principal art treasures of the country, whether in public museums, in temples, or in private collections. It is impossible to speak in too strong terms of the value to the student of these publications. Many of the coloured plates, the reproductions, for instance, of certain old Buddhist scrolls, are themselves works of art. It is not too much to say that a careful study of such a series as Tajima's *Selected Relics of Japanese Art*, of which ten volumes have already appeared and as many more are promised, is in itself a liberal education in the arts of the Far East. Not the least interesting and important part of this collection is to be found in reproductions of the works of Chinese artists of the Tang, Sung, and Ming dynasties, works that have been so piously preserved by the Japanese, while, as far as we know, their fellows that have remained in the land of their origin have, with few exceptions, disappeared. Of not less merit is what may be called the rival publication, the *Kokkwa*, perhaps the most sumptuous art journal ever issued from any press. A less ambitious publication, the *Japanese Magazine of Art*, contains many interesting

notices of Japanese art objects as well as excellent photographs on a smaller scale.¹

Of considerable value to us are some of the photographs in the handsome work, *L'Histoire de l'Art du Japon*, published in connection with the International Exhibition of 1900. Finally, of the few fine examples of the older art of Japan that have found their way to Europe, excellent photographs may from time to time be found in some of the French sale catalogues, for example in that of the Hayashi collection, dispersed in Paris in 1902.

¹ All these works may be consulted in the Art Library at South Kensington. In the Print Room of the British Museum the numbers of the *Kokkwa* have been unbound and the plates arranged according to the various schools. The English text that accompanies the plates—it is unfortunately absent from the earlier numbers of the *Kokkwa*—throws in many cases much light upon Japanese canons of art criticism.

PART I

PAINTING AND SCULPTURE, TREATED IN CONNECTION WITH A GENERAL SKETCH OF JAPANESE HISTORY

CHAPTER I

PREHISTORIC ART—THE CONTENTS OF THE DOLMEN TOMBS

THE history of a country can scarcely be said to take a start until some record begins to be kept of contemporary events. For this the knowledge of writing in some form or other is indispensable—in fact the commencement of a literature. For such acquaintance as we have with the life of a people before they have acquired this art, we must be indebted to the researches of the archæologist. When this is the case it will almost invariably be found that the little we do know is derived from the exploration of graves. This is what we find in Japan. The history, properly speaking, of the country begins with the introduction of Buddhism, during the sixth and seventh centuries of our era. Along with the new religion came the knowledge of the Chinese characters. It is this period that forms the connecting-link between prehistoric and his-

toric times in the country. The old records that survive of the events of these and earlier centuries—the *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi*—were not compiled before the beginning of the eighth century of our era, and in these chronicles it is only the record of the two previous centuries (this part indeed fills the larger portion of both books) that can lay any claim to historic accuracy. Now by the end of this period the Buddhist religion had been firmly established in the land, and along with it the already advanced civilisation of China had obtained so firm a grip that the old-world customs and manner of life of the Japanese tribes came to be viewed by the compilers of these records in great measure through Chinese spectacles.

To understand this we need only turn to the not dissimilar changes that were taking place during these very centuries in England. Here, in the case of our Saxon ancestors, there is the same break between the early times, of which the little we know is derived from the exploration of the heathen cemeteries, and those later days after the introduction of Christianity, for which we have a record in the chronicles of the monasteries. The comparison may indeed be carried further, for the influence of the classical historians of Rome on these Saxon chroniclers is analogous to that of the Chinese writers on early Japanese literature.

The points, then, to accentuate in this earliest chapter of Japanese culture are, that whatever is known of this culture is derived almost entirely from the exploration of tombs, that it is pre-Buddhist, and that it has some

claims to be of native origin, at all events that the Chinese influence was at this time not so prominent as in later historic periods.

The prehistoric culture indeed, represented as I have said for the most part by the contents of the dolmen tombs, has on the face of it little connection with that which immediately succeeded it in Japan. On the artistic side, in the earliest historic period, the place taken by the Buddhist religion was a commanding one. On the other hand, the native religion of the Japanese, the Shinto worship, however important as a factor in welding the national character, has had little or no direct influence upon the fine arts of the country. If we are to judge by the evidence of the monuments, it would seem that the worship of the Kami or ancestral spirits was for ages overshadowed by the gorgeous ceremonial of the Buddhist worship. The simple ritual, indeed, of the Shinto religion offers few opportunities for artistic expression.

Of the objects found in the dolmen tombs as representative of the early pre-Buddhist culture there is an important collection in the British Museum, perhaps the only collection of the kind to be found out of the Far East. It was brought together in Japan by Professor Gowland; indeed, most of the objects contained in it were found by him during his exploration of these tombs. For what we know of this early phase of Japanese art we are in the main indebted to a paper contributed in 1897 to *Archæologia* (2nd series, vol. v.) by the same gentleman. The Japanese antiquaries

have indeed of late years taken up the search, with the result that an important collection has been formed for the Uyeno Museum at Tokio. But what has been written on the subject of their antiquities by the Japanese has been much biased by the fact that, until very recently at least, their intense patriotism and their respect for the traditional origin of the Imperial house have been incompatible with a critical attitude when dealing with the early literary records. These, when not purely mythical, have, as we have said, been much coloured by the endeavour to bring them into line with the classical works of the Chinese historians.

The dolmens or chambered tombs of Japan, in and around which these strange-shaped vessels of earthenware, these swords and horse-trappings have been found, closely resemble, on the whole, a certain class of prehistoric graves well known to western archæologists. In the typical examples we find a passage, lined and roofed by huge slabs of unhewn rock, leading to a burial-chamber of similar construction—the whole originally covered by a mound of earth. These tombs are, above all, frequent in the original home of the Imperial dynasty—in the northern part of the province of Yamato and in the adjacent districts of Idzumi and Kawachi.

And here we may say, once for all, that in tracing the history of Japanese art, it is with this district alone—so small a part of the widely stretching islands of Japan—that we are concerned, until at least we come to comparatively modern times. Let the reader trace

on the map the course of the Yodo Gawa from where the river issues from the southern end of the Biwa lake to where it falls into the Inland Sea, and mark the position of the three old cities of Kioto, Nara, and Naniwa (now known as Ozaka). Until the foundation of Yedo, early in the seventeenth century, there will be little reference in the art history of the country to any spot far outside the narrow limits that we have indicated. Here it was that the arts of Japan were developed, and even at the present day it is in the temples of Nara and Kioto that the most important of the monuments of Japanese art are preserved. I note this point, as the predominance of Yedo, both politically and in part artistically, during the last three centuries, has tended to obscure the fact that it is in the Gokinai—the five 'home counties' surrounding the old capital—and not in Yedo and the adjacent Kwanto district, that the centre of interest for Japanese history, above all for the art history, is to be discovered.¹

To return, after this geographical excursus, to our dolmens. I should mention that other important groups are indeed found in the western island of Kiushiu, above all in Higo, and others again in Idzumo, on the north coast of the western arm of the main island. That this is so is in a measure a confirmation of the theory that regards these remains as the tombs of the

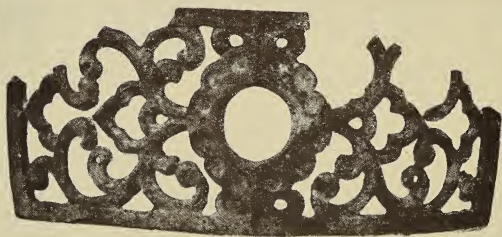
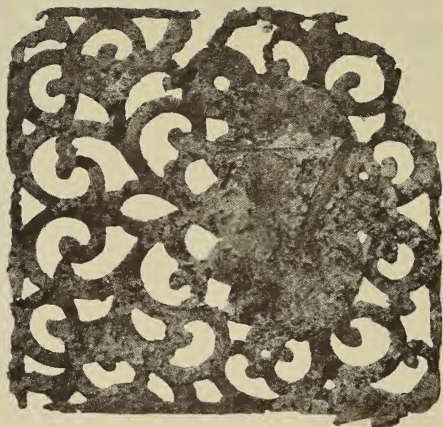
¹ The only important exception to this general statement is to be found in the short-lived glory of the northern Kamakura, and this was confined almost to the thirteenth century.

conquering race that crossed over from the mainland in remote times, a race that we may regard as the ancestors of at least the ruling classes in Japan. This warlike people, armed with steel swords and armour of iron, gradually forced back the savages that then owned the land. These were the Ainos, of whom only a few tribes still survive in the northern island of Yezo. With these aborigines we have nothing here to do. They were rude hunters and fishermen; their stone arrow-heads are turned up as frequently in Japan as are with us the flint weapons of the early inhabitants of Britain; their pottery, roughly moulded by hand, has been extracted from the kitchen middens that are to be found in many places along the coast of the main island. How far the new race, with iron weapons, had pushed forward, even in these prehistoric times, is shown by the existence of a group of dolmens (they were explored many years ago by Sir Ernest Satow) to the north of the Gulf of Yedo. Here, far away from their southern homes, some adventurous tribes of the new race had buried their chiefs among the woods and mountains of the hairy barbarians.

As for the objects found in these dolmen graves, they fall naturally into three classes—arms and armour, pottery, and finally minor objects chiefly for personal adornment.¹

The iron swords found in the dolmens differ little in

¹ We are here distinctly in the Iron Age. Of an earlier Bronze Age, of which there is evidence in another type of burial-mound (found, above all, in the western island of Kiushiu), we need not speak here, as it has no relation to the later art of Japan.



COPPER-GILT ORNAMENT FOR HORSE FURNITURE
From Doimen tomb. British Museum

size and build from the typical Japanese swords of later times. Like them they have one cutting edge only,¹ but, on the other hand, in these old swords the back of the blade is perfectly straight. What again distinguishes them from later swords is the shape of the pommel, a rounded knob, deflected on one side, calling to mind a well-known form of Turkish yataghan. We now come to one of the most interesting points in the art of the dolmen builders. Like their successors in historical times, they were experts in the working of metals. The wood of which the grip of the sword is made is encased by a thin plate of copper covered with gold, and this casing is expanded to form the bulb-like knob. The copper guard, oval in outline, is similarly plated with gold (in other cases the guard is of iron as in later times). This use of a sheet of copper, gilt or sometimes silvered, as a sheathing to a core of wood or iron, is above all characteristic of the objects we are describing.

The breastplates and the helmets, built up of elaborately riveted sheets of iron, differ essentially from those in use in later times. So also the horse furniture which takes so prominent a place in these finds. Here again the coating of gilt copper plays an important part. The shapes of the ornamental appendages should be carefully noted, for in these we for the first time

¹ This is important to bear in mind, as the Japanese antiquaries have been wont to provide their old heroes with two-edged swords after the Chinese type; such swords may indeed have been introduced from China in the seventh or eighth century, only to be ousted later by a return to the old native form.

come upon work that has any claim to be called artistic. Now, it will be observed that the outlines and incised decorations, though remotely reminiscent of the art of western Asia, or even of classical design, have little in common with later Japanese motives.

But it is to the pottery, found both within their old burial-chambers and upon the mounds that cover them, that the greatest interest attaches. Some idea of the variety of forms then in use can be formed from the collection in the British Museum. These elaborate vessels are in nearly every case thrown on the wheel, and considerable skill is shown in the handling and shaping of the clay. Now (and this is a point of considerable interest), if we are to put our trust in the native records, the knowledge of the potter's wheel was first brought over to Japan by a Chinese priest, named Giogi, as late as the eighth century of our era. But some of this wheel-thrown dolmen pottery may well be a thousand years older than Giogi's time! Such a fact as this may make us hesitate in accepting literary evidence in treating of technical questions. That the potter's art should have been so far advanced at this early period is certainly remarkable, as little progress was made during the ensuing ages. For many centuries after the close of the dolmen period the pottery of the Japanese remained rude and primitive—even the application of a glaze, quite unknown in these early times, was slow in coming into general use.

I will not dwell upon the varied shapes of these vessels; they were for the most part intended to hold



VASE FOR OFFERINGS
Primitive pottery from old burial mound

food and other offerings to the spirit of the deceased. In a few cases they are decorated with rudely modelled figures of men and animals in full relief. Of more interest are the quaint terra-cotta figures, chiefly of men in armour, that were placed around the burial-mounds. If we are to trust the story told in the 'Nihongi,' these men of clay were first made about the beginning of our era to replace the retainers of the deceased chief, who, along with his women-folk and his horses, had before this time been sacrificed to his manes at the funeral feast. On some of these rudely modelled figures the design of the helm and the breastplate can be traced. The example, however, in the British Museum apparently represents a woman.

Of the minor objects found in these tombs, the most important, perhaps, are the bronze mirrors. The elaborate designs on the back of these circular disks point undoubtedly to Chinese prototypes, if the actual mirrors are not in some cases themselves of Chinese origin. We must remember that this prehistoric period of Japanese art is in part contemporary with the great Han dynasty in China—a period of considerable artistic culture and of extended foreign commerce.¹ The faces of these mirrors are polished with mercury, and we may note that the sulphide of that metal, vermilion, played an important part in the burial of the corpse, as indeed it still does in the

¹ There is mention in the Chinese Annalists of the export of mirrors to Japan in the days of the Han dynasty. It is probably as a protection against evil spirits that these mirrors find a place in the tombs,

interment of persons of Imperial rank at the present day, according to the revived rites of the Shinto religion.

For their personal ornament, the dolmen builders made large use of *armillae* and other ornaments of copper sheathed with gold. The place of jewels was taken by the curious 'comma,' or tadpole-shaped *magatama* of agate, jasper, steatite, or other stones, and by beads of glass, either round or fuge-shaped. In their love for such ornaments, these early folk differed essentially from their descendants. The Japanese in historic times—and this holds true of both sexes—have never favoured the use of chains, rings, or other forms of jewelry. The glass beads I should be inclined to regard as imported from the continent, but in this opinion I am in opposition to some of the best authorities. In any case, the manufacture of glass, indeed its use in any form, was unknown in Japan in later days.

Of other relics of this early period—if indeed they date from this time—I can only mention in passing the curious conical bells, with ribbon-like flanges. The thinness of these bronze castings and the geometrical ornaments in low relief on the surface, call to mind, in a measure, a certain class of sacrificial vessels in use in pre-Buddhist days in China, still more perhaps the huge drums so much in favour among some of the primitive tribes of the Indo-China peninsula. A fine example of the flanged bell is to be seen in the British Museum, and may be compared with the



BRONZE MIRROR

Probably from a Dolmen tomb

bronze drums of the Karen tribes, of which there are magnificent examples close at hand in the Ethnological Gallery. These bells, I should add, though dug up in the ground, have never been met with in connection with the funeral mounds. They have been found in the province of Yamato, and above all near the southern extremity of Lake Biwa. Some fragments of castings of a similar nature have, I believe, been discovered in Siam.

Finally, we must bear in mind that there is not any sharp line of demarcation between the objects treated of in this chapter and the earliest monuments of what may be called historic times. Some of the earliest Buddhist relics may indeed be older than those found in the later dolmen tombs. This is especially true of some of the *misasagi*, the gigantic Imperial tombs, which are but glorified tumuli of a special type covering dolmen chambers.¹ The distinction lies in this: that the latter—the contents of the tombs—are uninfluenced by the new religion, and show no trace of the knowledge of Chinese or other written characters.

¹ For an account of these *misasagi*, see the already-quoted paper by Professor Gowland in *Archæologia*, as well as an article by him in the *Transactions of the Japan Society*, vol. iv., 1898.

CHAPTER II

THE NARA AND FUJIWARA PERIODS

Buddhism and Art—Shotoku—Horiuji—Todaiji—Kobo
Daishi—the Nara Schools

IN early days, that is, before the beginning of the eighth century, there was no fixed seat of Imperial rule in Japan. On the death of an emperor, his palace—if we may apply that name to the straw-thatched wooden structure in which he lived—was abandoned, and the court of the new ruler was established in some fresh spot. The range was not a wide one, the traditional sites of the palaces of these early mikados are all within a narrow band of country, stretching between the shore of the Biwa Lake and the seacoast, near to what is now Ozaka. The latter town, then known as Naniwa, was, I think, more than once the seat of the capital. In most cases a beautiful site was chosen among the foot-hills that are backed by the barren mountains of Yamato and Kishiu.

It was in this district that the court was established at the time of Prince Shotoku, perhaps the first important name in Japanese history properly so called.

THE NARA AND FUJIWARA PERIODS 27

With the early struggles of Buddhism we are not concerned, but by the beginning of the seventh century the new religion had become a power in the land. Shotoku, who lived at this time, has been called the Constantine of Japan. As regent during the reign of the Empress Suiko, he conducted the last campaign against the champions of the old Shinto religion. He was himself an artist, and there still exist both paintings and statues that are attributed to his hand—there is no reason to doubt that some of these works are at least contemporary with his rule. A few somewhat rude statues have indeed survived that are attributed to an even earlier date. There is an unmistakable grandeur and the suggestion of a deep religious feeling about some of these early works of Buddhist art (many of them are reproduced by Tajima and in the *Kokkwa*), but in very few cases can we affirm with certainty that they are the works of native artists. Not that they are in any way distinctly Chinese in character. It is rather of the contemporary Indian art, as we know it from the frescoes in the Caves of Ajunta above all, that we are reminded by these monuments. And yet there is no tradition of any direct connection between Japan and India at this time. Everything points to the Buddhist religion having been introduced by missionaries and immigrants from Korea, where an advanced civilisation then prevailed. It was a long and circuitous road that led to Japan from the classical home of the Buddhist religion in northern India. The path lay through central Asia, China, and Korea. But

in Asia at that time distances do not seem to have counted, and there was a constant stream of pilgrims passing along the roads.¹

It is at the old temple of Horiuji, on the road between Nara and Ozaka, that the art of this time is best represented. This is a foundation that dates back to the time of Shotoku, and there is little doubt that some of the massive wooden buildings still standing within the temple enclosure are as old as the commencement of the eighth century. Here are both sculpture and wall-paintings attributed to Tori Bushi, one of the earliest names in the history of Japanese art, but such an attribution is merely to be regarded as indicating a certain primitive method of treatment, the style, as we should say, of the first half of the seventh century. The bulk of the treasures in this temple are probably not earlier than the two following centuries (700-900 A.D.). Among them, I may mention in passing, are a series of early brocades with designs of the highest interest to the historian of art. The great paintings of Buddhist saints on the plaster of the walls were probably executed by a Korean priest. There is an unmistakable grandeur in these gigantic figures, and this in spite of their present state of decay.²

¹ Some light has been lately thrown on the trade and pilgrim routes of those days by the exploration of the buried cities of Chinese Turkestan. In the objects brought back by Mr. Stein, and now to be seen in the British Museum, it is the Buddhist art of India that is predominant, although the documents found are written in Chinese.

² Of the other precious treasures of this very museum of Chinese, Korean, and early Japanese art I have no space to speak. For good illustrations of the *Tama-Mushi*—the beautiful portable shrine pre-

It is with the establishment of the Imperial residence at Nara early in the eighth century that the authentic history of Japan may be said to begin. The new town was laid out in imitation of a Chinese capital, with nine gates and nine avenues. Already before this time a steady intercourse had been established with China, no longer by way of Korea alone. We hear of a Japanese embassy at the court of the Sui emperors who preceded the great Tang dynasty, and it is recorded that many Chinese artisans had at this time emigrated to Japan. There were now Japanese artists who rivalled their masters of the Middle Kingdom, but hardly yet perhaps was there a distinct Japanese style of art. It was essentially an eclectic period, more so perhaps than any other in the course of Japanese history, until at least we come to contemporary days.

The progress in civilisation and luxury was a rapid one, and the enthusiasm for the Buddhist religion so great that the wealth of the country was in danger of being absorbed in the erection of new temples and monasteries, while all the gold and copper in the country, withdrawn from other uses, was in process of being melted down and cast into images of Buddhist gods and saints. The Emperor Shomu (729-748 A.D.) gave orders that a state temple should be built in every province. A huge bronze image of Vairokana, the first of its kind in Japan, was erected at Nara, and

served in the *Kondo* of the temple—I must again refer to Tajima's *Selected Relics*. This shrine is above all noteworthy for the remarkable technique of its decorations.

it was then that the great bronze bell that still hangs in the temple of Todaiji in that city was cast.

Even objects of secular art were dedicated to the temples. Thus in the great structure (built of logs of wood triangular in section, laid one above the other) that still stands in the wood behind Todaiji are preserved to the present day the treasure that Shomu on his death bequeathed to the great Buddha Vairokana. In the Shoso-in, as this building is called,¹ and in the adjacent museum, which contains many relics of the time brought from Horiuji, the arts of the eighth century may be studied.² I know of no parallel to this collection in any other country. One is brought face to face with the luxurious surroundings of the court life of the day; for the bulk of the objects are of a secular nature. What strikes one above all is the strangely exotic character of so many of the objects exhibited. An explanation of this may perhaps be found in the fact that not a few of them were rare examples of foreign art sent from China or Korea as presents to the Japanese emperor.

Nothing is more remarkable than the undoubted presence of Persian, more precisely of Sassanian,

¹ The Shoso-in may probably be regarded as the sole surviving relic of the Imperial palace.

² A complete series of these objects have been reproduced in colour in a rare work, the *Kokkwa Yoho*, published at Tokio in 1882; of this I have only seen a few parts. An interesting selection of the more important treasures has also been photographed in the official *Histoire de l'Art du Japon* (Paris, 1900). I had an opportunity of examining this extraordinary collection when it was first thrown open to the public in 1878.



STATUE OF A BODHISATTVA
Wood, formerly painted. Nara period, eighth century

motives in a considerable number of cases. The same influence may be discerned in some other objects long preserved at Horiuji—witness the winged horse in relief on metal ware, or again, the horseman with tiara and inflated *bullæ* floating above his head, on more than one fragment of silk brocade. In explanation of the presence of these unlooked-for designs, I can only call attention to the fact that not long before this time the Sassanian empire had been overthrown by the Arabs, and the sons of the last Persian king had fled eastward to take refuge at the court of the Chinese emperor. Possibly the art treasures that they or their escort had saved from the Arab *débâcle* may have found their way into the collection of the palace, and some of these may have been subsequently presented to the Japanese ambassadors, being regarded in the light of strange curiosities likely to amuse their master.

There are other objects in this marvellous collection which may not impossibly have come from south China or Tonkin, though some of these may perhaps rather be of Korean origin. We, indeed, know little of the indigenous Korean art of this time. The curious paintings on screens may possibly be of Korean origin; there is one on which is depicted the plump figure of a young girl, her head enveloped in a huge wig, standing in a naïvely rendered landscape. Still more surprising is a pair of upright harps (a form quite foreign to Japan), for these take one back, it would seem, to the art of ancient Egypt. (See Note, p. 41.)

On the whole, of this art of the Nara period (eighth

century), it may be said that there is little in common with the later development of art in Japan. In some respects it seems more familiar to us. In the symmetrical patterns there are reminiscences at times of Greek art, other motives are rather Indian or Saracenic in character. This we must remember was the time of the conquests of the great Tang dynasty of northern China. The Arab, too, was already trading with the southern ports. There was perhaps at this period more intercourse between the countries of Asia, west, south, and east, than at any time before or since. It is not the less remarkable that we should find proof of this intercourse preserved to us among the hills of Yamato.

The Buddhist religion had passed through many strange developments before it reached the shores of Japan. In China various sects had been established, and each in turn sent its missionaries to the eastern islands. By none of these were stranger doctrines preached than by the priests of the Shingon sect. The teachings of this extreme form of the 'greater learning'¹ were brought over by Kobo Daishi, 'the most famous of all Buddhist saints . . . preacher, painter, sculptor, calligraphist and traveller' (Chamberlain, *Handbook to Japan*). It was at the commencement of

¹ The Buddhist sects, both of China and Japan, without exception accept the more comprehensive and eclectic 'Greater Vehicle' as opposed to the simpler if narrower 'Lesser Vehicle' of the Cingalese and Burmese. It may at least be said of the former—the Maha-yana teaching—that in the place of a pessimistic system of metaphysics it built up, as time went on, a practical working religion.

the ninth century, that Kukai, better known by his posthumous name of Kobo Daishi, founded the great monastery of Koya San. Here on the level top of a mountain, nearly three thousand feet above the plain of Yamato that it overlooks, surrounded by forests of giant cryptomeria, the saint lies buried, or rather, seated in a vault, he awaits, rapt in contemplation, the coming of Miroku, the Buddhist Messiah.

Many art treasures of Kobo Daishi's time are still preserved in the temples of Koya San—the largest group of monastic buildings in Japan. In spite of repeated fires there are here carvings and paintings dating from the ninth century. Viewed with special reverence in Japan are 'the 8000 rolls of Buddhist scripture, written in letters of gold, and elaborately ornamented with silver designs.' There are other relics so precious and holy that they are exposed to no mortal eyes; it is the duty of the abbot of the monastery to inspect them, and this but once, on the occasion of his installation. For us, however, the great triptych attributed to Yeshin Sodzu (*circa* 1000 A.D.) is of greater interest. Here the heaven of Amida is displayed. The naïve smile of the angel musicians calls to mind similar scenes in our western art of the thirteenth or fourteenth century.

To be buried on Koya San was the ambition of every Japanese; the vast cemetery is indeed the most renowned in the country. Nowhere else can the Buddhist sepulchral monuments be so well studied. These are mostly of architectural form, carved in hard stone;

for the space of nearly a mile they are closely packed beneath the great trees.

This Shingon teaching, with its love of 'mystic formulae, magic spells and incantations,' may be compared to some of the Gnostic developments of Christianity. The sect in a measure absorbed the older Shinto worship, and after this time, except in the case of a few shrines of especial holiness, the simple structure of the *miya* of the native gods was replaced by a modified form of the new Buddhist architecture. The teaching of the Shingon sect appealed, on the whole, to the sensuous side of human nature; it favoured a rich and elaborate ritual amid gorgeous surroundings. As a famous calligraphist and the reputed inventor of the *hiragana* syllabary, Kobo Daishi is of interest to us. He may be regarded as the first who taught in Japan the Chinese doctrine of the all-importance of the written character.

With the foundation of Kioto in 794 by the Emperor Kwammu, a new era in Japanese history takes its start. Early in the Heian period, for so the ensuing four centuries are called by the Japanese, the Fujiwara family rose to the commanding position in the country that it so long maintained. The consort of the Emperor was invariably chosen from this family, and into its hands the government of the country in great measure fell—the Mikado himself was generally little better than a puppet.

It is, on the whole, rather for its literary production than its art that this Fujiwara period, as we may well call

what of its sculpture and painting?

it, was distinguished. It was the classical time of the Japanese poems and romances (of the *uta* and *monogatari*, that is to say) written in the pure native tongue and uninfluenced by Chinese models. As for the art of the time, for the first two centuries at least, it continued to be dependent upon the Buddhist worship; at all events nearly all the objects of artistic interest that survive from these early times are to be found in the treasure-houses of the temples. This was a period of a refined if somewhat effeminate civilisation, centred round the *Dairi* at Kioto—the Imperial palace and the surrounding government departments from which the whole country was ruled. The important part played by women, and the great social freedom that they enjoyed, is a marked characteristic of these times.

The new town of Kioto was laid out in imitation of the capital of the Tang dynasty of China. But Chinese influence was on the whole less predominant than in the preceding Nara period. The new native literature was cultivated not only at the court. Many of the most famous poets of the time were monks or nuns, and thus before long a new direction was given to painting and sculpture. But meantime it is by the gorgeous temple rolls, by the Mandara—altar-pieces, we may call them—and by the statues of lacquered wood or of bronze, that are preserved in so many of the old temples of Kioto, that the art of the time is represented.

Contemporary with the foundation of Kioto is that of the great monastery on Hiyeisan overlooking the

city. This is the central temple of the Tendai sect, the rivals of the Shingon in this early period. It was the founder of this sect who first brought over from China in a more complete form the teaching of 'the Greater Vehicle,' and first introduced to the Japanese the great Buddha Amida, the Being of boundless light who rules in the Western Paradise. The Tendai may indeed be regarded as the mother sect of all later developments of Japanese Buddhism, and Amida Nyorai is even of greater importance in Japanese art than Sakya Muni, the founder of the religion. The heaven of Amida, where the Buddha forms the centre of a hierarchy of saints and music-making angels, takes the place of the heavenly host that we see in the altarpieces of the early Italian painters.

Now if Amida holds this commanding position among the Buddhas in Japan, followed at a distance by Dainichi, by Miroku (the 'Coming Buddha'), and finally by Sakya himself, so among the saints of lesser rank, the Bōdhisatvas—those about to attain to Buddhahood—Kwannon (in origin to be identified like Amida with a mere abstraction) stands supreme. In later developments regarded above all as the Goddess of Mercy, Kwannon (*Chinese* Kwan-yin) fills the place held by the Virgin Mary in the Catholic Church. But it must be borne in mind that by the strict Buddhist the question of sex is never considered in relation to his deities.

The monks of the Tendai sect have not influenced the arts of the country to the same extent as the

followers of Kobo Daishi. In subsequent days these monks—those at least who dwelled on Hiyeisan—were stalwart fighters. Later on we shall have to speak of the followers of the Zen or contemplative sect, whose teaching did not, however, reach Japan till the next period of our history. It was their doctrine of the Dyana that gave a new direction to the art of the country, and the influence of their teaching is felt even at the present day.

It was during the earlier part of the Fujiwara period that the general scheme of the Buddhist picture—and the same may be said of the statues—was fixed once for all; a definite Japanese type was arrived at. Compared with what we find in India a great sobriety of treatment will be noticed. Thus we no longer find among the hosts attendant upon the Buddha the houri displaying her exuberant charms. Again, in the passage of the new doctrine through China the hooded cobra has been replaced by the dragon.

According to the old traditions of art history in Japan, it was to Kose no Kanaoka (we will say nothing of the earlier and still more hazy Kawanari) that the honour of founding a native school of painting must be given. Kanaoka, who was working during the middle of the ninth century, is a great name in Japan. It is recorded that he painted landscapes, Chinese sages, above all, horses. But his extant works—all of them have remained in Japan—are without exception representations of Buddhist saints. That Buddhist subjects should so largely predominate

among the early treasures of Japanese art is indeed but natural. As we have said, it is in the temples that these treasures have been preserved. In fact, had not the Buddhist monks shown a more 'catholic' taste than their contemporaries in Europe, examples of the secular art of the time would have been even rarer in Japan than they are now.

We have spoken of the extant works of Kanaoka, but it is doubtful whether a single picture survives that would be accepted as his by the 'university of experts.' He probably modelled himself on the lofty and masculine style of Wu-Taotse, the greatest master of the early Tang period in China.

It was some time after the death of Kanaoka, in the tenth century, namely, that the painters of Japan may for the first time be grouped in various schools. There are three such early schools according to the latest native critics. (1) The descendants and followers of Kanaoka—the Kose school—painted religious subjects under the influence of the Tang masters. (2) The Takuma school, of which the greatest name is Takuma Tamenari, was influenced by new traditions from China, and adopted a larger brush and a bolder style. In the eleventh century the Takuma replaced the Kose family in the position of court painters (*Ye-dokoro-tsukari*). They, too, were in the main painters of Buddhist saints. (3) The Kasuga school was founded late in the tenth century by Kasuga no Motomitsu. The painters of this school were from the first connected with the old Shinto shrine of that name at Nara, and they are

generally held to be the originators of the native or Yamato school of painting. The Kasuga men, indeed, at first painted religious subjects, but with a finer line and with a tendency to bright, simple colours. The literature of the time, as we have seen, had taken on a strictly native character, eschewing all Chinese words and subjects. It was, indeed, distinctly a 'Yamato' school, but the same cannot be said of the painters (if we are to judge by what has survived) until a somewhat later date. By the eleventh century, however, the Takuma and what was left of the Kose painters had been absorbed by the Kasuga school, and this now fell more into line with the literary movement of the day. So that by the twelfth century a great national school had been formed, a school comprising a marvellous string of talented artists, whose works, I should add, are entirely unknown in Europe. But these men belong for the most part to a later day, after the rise of the Kamakura Shogunate.

From a calligraphic point of view, a cross division may be made of the artists of the Fujiwara period, namely, into those who painted in the old Chinese Buddhist style with an upright brush and accurate, uniform strokes, and the followers of the native school, who adopted an oblique position, involving a free or sweeping stroke. This, to the native mind, is a distinction of the greatest importance, corresponding to two methods of writing the Chinese characters.

At Uji, near Kioto, now the centre of the most famous tea district of Japan, the old temple of

Biyōdō-In is, even in its present decayed condition, perhaps the most important surviving relic of late Fujiwara days. It is of especial interest to us as comprising some buildings that were originally of a secular character, for in the eleventh century a great Fujiwara noble had bequeathed his palace to some monks of the Tendai sect who had already settled in the neighbourhood. The Hō-hō Do or Phoenix Hall was built by the monks more or less in the shape of that imperial bird. Here, on the walls behind the altar, may still be traced the nine circles of Amida's paradise in the West, painted boldly in brilliant colours by Takuma Tamenari. This, with the older work at Horiuji, is almost the only—certainly the most important—example of wall-painting in Japan. The altar was originally decorated with gold lacquer inlaid with mother-of-pearl, and this latter substance plays, too, a part in the richly adorned coffered ceiling. But little now remains of this magnificent decoration.

Of the sculpture of the Fujiwara time there are many examples extant in the temples of Kioto. There is, indeed, no grand school like that founded by Unkei in the ensuing Kamakura period. Kōshō, and above all his son Jōchō (early eleventh century), are perhaps the most commanding names among the artists of the time, and we know more of their works than of those of the contemporary painters. Their plump, well-fed figures have nothing ascetic about them. Under a gorgeous canopy, backed by a nimbus or *mandorla* of metal-work, elaborately pierced and richly gilt, the



A BODHISATTVA
Wood, painted, ninth century

smiling Buddha appears well content to postpone the complete attainment of Nirvana.

It was early in the eleventh century that this luxurious period reached its culminating point. It was then that the regent Michinaga built the great temple of Hōjō-ji, and filled it with the masterworks of contemporary artists. It was the marvel of the age; but only thirty-seven years after their completion the temple buildings were burnt down. What remained from the conflagration sufficed, it was said, to furnish the other monasteries of Kioto with their most valuable treasures.

NOTE ON SASSANIAN INFLUENCE. (*See p. 31*).—Piruz, the son of Yezdegerd, the last Sassanian king, ended his days at Si-an Fu. In 667 he was allowed to establish a Persian temple in the Chinese capital.

On the famous Sassanian relief, carved on the rocks at Tagh-e-Bostan, may be seen upright harps similar to those preserved at Nara. *

CHAPTER III

THE KAMAKURA AND ASHIKAGA PERIODS

Yoshitsune—Buddhist Sculpture—Meicho—The Zen or Contemplative Sect—Origin of Landscape Art—Sesshiu

THE Japanese are fond of dwelling upon the refined civilisation of the late Fujiwara days. Then, at Kioto, the pleasure-loving nobility that surrounded the court, attired in long trailing robes of brocade, seem to have given little care to aught beside the making of verses, the burning of incense, and the arrangement of joyous meetings, *al fresco*, among the many beautiful spots around the capital. The ladies of the court would ride out in their cumbrous bullock-carts to pass the day in the capping of verses among the cherry flowers of spring or the scarlet maple leaves of autumn, while their lovers hovered around, playing on the flute or the pan-pipes. This is the life so admirably described in the *Genji Monogatari*, the most famous, the longest, and perhaps the most wearisome of Japanese romances (c. A.D. 1000).

The painters, the lacquerers, and the workers in metal played, as was natural, an important part in a world of this description. 'The exquisite taste and

chaste refinement shown in the art of this time may be compared to the pale moon timidly peeping through a cloud, or to the cherry blossoms hidden in a mist.' It is to a recent Japanese writer on art that I am indebted for this simile.

But, alas! but little has survived to illustrate the art of this time. War, fire, and earthquake played havoc with Kioto during the ensuing centuries. A few pictured rolls (*makimono*)—and these deal chiefly with the lives of saints and priests—some gorgeous temple altar-pieces (*mandara*), one or two rare examples of lacquer, and—this, perhaps, the most important—not a few statues of Buddhist divinities, in lacquered wood or bronze, are still to be found in the temples of Kioto or in the private collections of some princely families. But of works of a secular character, scarcely anything has come down to us. For the paintings of the early Tosa school—the gorgeous illustrations to the *monogatari*—belong almost without exception to the following age.

Meanwhile the turbulent priests of the greater monasteries of Kioto were becoming a power in the state, and a strong military party was growing up in the provinces. The pleasure-loving nobles of the court, as represented above all by the Fujiwara family, were no longer able to appoint the governors of the distant departments. Two rival families—the Taira and the Minamoto—held the real power; the former around the capital, the latter in the border provinces to the north. Here the Minamoto chieftains, with their

X
 retainers, were engaged in constant warfare with the older race, the Yebisu or Ainos, whom they were gradually edging out of the main island. The crisis came about the middle of the twelfth century, when Kiyomori, of the Taira family, established himself at Hiogo as the first military governor of the land. Kiyomori, in turn, was overcome by his rivals of the Minamoto clan, under the leadership of Yoritomo. The narrative of the struggle of these two clans is perhaps the most popular in the whole course of Japanese history—the heroes and heroines of the story the most frequently represented in Japanese art.

*
 Who even in the West has not heard of the chivalrous hero, Yoshitsune, and of his faithful squire Benkei, the ex-brigand: how the former was done to death by his brother, the stern and ruthless Yoritomo; of the great hunting again on the slopes of Fuji, and of the deeds done by the chieftains there assembled? This was the time of the pathetic story of the Soga brethren, and of many other more or less legendary tales of daring. That these heroes of Far Eastern romance were strictly contemporaries with our Cœur-de-lion and Robin Hood may be noted in passing.

12th c.
 Yoritomo, before the end of the twelfth century, had established himself as virtual ruler of the whole land, and the feudal period of Japanese history takes its start from this time. He fixed his capital at Kamakura, not far from the modern port of Yokohama, and with him begins the line of the *Tai-i-Shogun*, the barbarian-repelling generals, which lasted with few inter-



BISHAMON

Wood, painted and gilt. Attributed to Unkei. Twelfth century

ruptions till the great revolution of our day. But the power of Yoritomo's own family was short-lived; almost in the next generation they became mere *fainéants*. There was a further relegation of power into the hands of the Hōjō regents, who lorded it at Kamakura up to the middle of the fourteenth century.

It is remarkable that this period of stern military rule—a period during which the only event of interest to us is the repulse of the Mongol Armada (1274-1281, but the native chroniclers have singularly little to say of this remarkable attack)—is above all noteworthy in the history of Japanese art. That this is so may be in a measure due to the revival of religious enthusiasm, for at this time many new Buddhist sects were founded, still more to the reflection of the great art movement in China under the cultured emperors of the Sung dynasty.

This was indeed the culminating period in Japan of the school of Buddhist sculpture. Unkei, who worked in the latter half of the twelfth century, is probably the greatest sculptor that Japan has produced. Many of the finest of the wooden statues at Nara formerly attributed to primitive Buddhist times are now recognised as works of his school. The use of clay over a wooden core and of a 'dry lacquer' coating was now abandoned in favour of wood or bronze. To Unkei and to his master Kwaikai must be attributed the two colossal Deva kings (Ni Ô) that guard the entrance to the often-mentioned temple of Todaiji at Nara. Even of higher artistic merit are the smaller figures (again of the Deva

kings, Indra and Brahma) at Kofukuji, attributed to Unkei's pupil Jôkaku. In the same temple are preserved the 'Demon lantern-bearers' of Koken. (For further detail concerning these and other remarkable examples of the glyptic art of the time, see Brinkley, vol. vii. pp. 110 *seq.* Good photographs of most of these works may be found in Tajima's *Selected Relics of Japanese Art.*)

Of the statues cast in bronze we need only mention the famous seated Buddha at Kamakura, perhaps the only example of the older Japanese art that is well known to Europeans. It was cast by one Ono Goro-yemon about the middle of the thirteenth century. In much of the sculpture, as in the painting of the time, the influence of the new Zen or contemplative sect of Buddhism, of which we shall have to treat in the next chapter, makes itself felt. But there are many statues that preserve the more sensuous and 'plump' type of the Fujiwara period.

Of the works of art of this time many must have been destroyed when Kamakura was burnt in the fifteenth century. Some of the most characteristic examples of thirteenth-century art are to be found in the vast series of painted rolls (*makimono*), so many of which are preserved in the temples of Kioto. This is a phase of Japanese art that may be best studied in the reproductions of Tajima and the *Kokkwa*, for it is, as far as I know, unrepresented in European collections. Here for the first time we come upon a truly secular and national rendering of life. The verve and energy

with which the scenes (generally the adventures and miracles of some priest) are depicted, and the admirable grouping of the figures, are no less remarkable than the beauty of the colouring. Perhaps the greatest representative of the early Tosa school of the thirteenth century was Nobuzane (died 1264), himself a member of the Fujiwara clan. Many of the 'Scenes from the life of an Artist' and from other painted scrolls by his hand have been reproduced of late in Japan.

There is at times a distinctly humorous or satiric note in these storied rolls, but the only painter who has any claim to be regarded as a caricaturist was one of the earliest of the series—Kakuyu, a man of princely birth and abbot of the great monastery of Miidera in the latter half of the twelfth century. He is generally known as Toba Sōjō or the Abbat of Toba, and the name of Toba-ye has since his time been given to a certain class of burlesque drawings; works of this class, however, are mostly of a much later date. For Toba Sōjō was in no way the founder of a school. On the whole he belongs to the Yamato-riu, and like most of the early artists of that school, he painted at times in the Buddhist style.

Meichō, known also as Chō Densu, may perhaps be regarded as the last great painter of the old Buddhist school. He belongs indeed chronologically to the next period—he died in 1427 at the age of seventy-six. But his richly coloured paintings of Buddhist saints have little in common with the new direction that art was taking at that time, under the influence of the Zen

teaching. I think that for dramatic intensity and for insight into character, Meichō surpasses all other painters of Japan. At Tōfukuji, in Kioto, of which temple he was a priest, are preserved as many as forty-five kakemonos by his hand, besides a huge picture (24 ft. by 48 ft.) representing the entrance of Sakya Muni into Nirvana, the most famous example of a subject (the *Nehan-zo* of the Japanese) often repeated in later days. A figure of a *Rakan* in the British Museum collection is a good example of Meichō's style and colouring.

Before the death of Chō Densu, and in close connection with the temple of Tōfukuji, a style of painting of quite a different character had been introduced from China. This is a school founded on the works, chiefly in black and white (*Sumi-ye*), of the great painters of the Sung dynasty. Landscape now for the first time plays an important part, the aim being that the religious emotion should be called up by the general sentiment of the landscape.

But this new departure in painting was dependent upon a movement that has profoundly affected all the subsequent art of Japan. To understand this, I must turn for a moment to consider the political and religious events of the time.

Early in the fourteenth century the centre of political interest returns once more to Kioto, where the Emperor Godaigo attained for a time to a position of real power: he was in fact the one emperor, during a period of more than a thousand years, who played an impor-

tant part in Japanese history. But this assertion of authority was but momentary, for the place of the Hōjō regent was soon taken by the astute Taka-uji, the founder of the Ashikaga family, who had been called in by the Emperor to aid him in breaking down the rule of the lords of Kamakura. The adventures of Godaigo and the tragic end of the hero Kusunoki Masashige, who fought until death for the Imperial cause, are favourite subjects with the Japanese artist. There is no lovelier spot in Japan than Yoshino,¹ the mountain town in Yamato, where the Emperor was fain to set up his court, while a rival Mikado ruled at Kyoto under the shadow of the Ashikaga shoguns. For Kamakura was now abandoned, and Kyoto became for some two hundred and fifty years once more the centre of rule.

The Ashikaga Shoguns have always been regarded with execration by the supporters of the divine right of the Imperial family—the feeling is even stronger in their case than in that of their successors of the Tokugawa line. That they had openly fought with the sun-descended Emperor, and had set up their rule in Kyoto beside his ancestral palace, reducing him to the position of a mere pensioner, is enough to account for such a feeling. But the historian of art looks upon the Ashikaga princes in a more friendly light. It would

¹ Yoshino has held a supreme position in both art and literature from early days—it is a name to conjure with both in the native literature and with the painters of the *Yamato-riu*. To the Japanese mind this position is accentuated by its groves of cherries—the flower of the patriot and the warrior—and still more by its connection with Godaigo and Kusunoki.

be difficult to point to a line of rulers in any land, more intimately connected with the art life of the time, and this in its highest sense. More than one of them were artists of no mean capacity. They gave the direction not only to the art, but to the philosophy of life that has moulded the Japanese character, especially that of the military class. It is a spirit that is not exhausted even to-day.

To understand what has been one of the principal moving forces in the building up of this spirit, it would be necessary to study the teaching of the contemplative sect of Buddhists, no easy matter for the western mind to grasp. This Zen or Dyana teaching, to which I have already more than once referred, is of Chinese origin. The sect looks up to Bōdhidharma, the last of the great Indian teachers of Buddhism, who in the sixth century brought the doctrine to China. After his ascetic doctrines had been rejected by the Chinese emperor of the day, Daruma (to give him his Japanese name) sat for nine years in meditation with his face to a wall, until his legs rotted off under him. Few figures are more prominent in the whole range of Japanese art. The stern-visaged saint of the earlier painters, with hood over head, walking majestically over the waves, became in later days a favourite motive for the reckless humours of the painters of the popular school and for the quaint drolleries of the netsuke carver. His grim face now stares at you from the shop front of the tobacconist—he has become the patron-saint of the smoker.



THE FASTING BUDDHA
Bronze

Unlike the other sects of Buddhists the Zen teaching lays no special value upon any special *sutra* or scripture. Wisdom must come from the heart, so without words the most profound knowledge may be conveyed from the teacher to the mind prepared to receive it by a mere glance or a smile. The priests of this contemplative sect were celebrated for their poverty and for their learning—for in later times the study of books was encouraged as a help to the life of meditation.

Still more important to us was the stress laid upon the contemplation of nature in all her aspects as a discipline to the soul and as a means of purging the spirit of all the calls of the flesh. 'The beauties of nature were but mirrors in which the disciple should see the miracles of his own soul repeated.' Once this point of view was adopted, it was but a step further to encourage the rendering with the brush of these counsellings of nature. Thus for the first time in human history was a distinct school of pure landscape painting established. The great landscape painters of China in the tenth and eleventh centuries were idealists influenced by such motives as these. Still more closely connected with this doctrine of the contemplative life were the Japanese painters of the fifteenth century, of whom we shall have presently to speak.

But this teaching of the Zen sect penetrated to other departments of life, and became a civilising influence in more ways than one. It was a Zen priest, one Eisai, who in the twelfth century brought the seeds of the tea plant to Japan, where indeed a coarse variety of the

shrub already grew wild. Tea-drinking found favour with the Buddhist priests as a means of warding off sleep during the practice of their religious austerities; its use, too, promoted a frame of mind favourable to religious meditation. But it was not till the early fifteenth century that the drinking of tea became general in Japan. Then it was that the rules that governed the ceremonious tasting of tea were first formalised.¹

The importance for us of the *Cha-no-yu* (literally 'hot water for tea'), as this tea-drinking ceremony was called, lies in the influence that it exercised upon so many of the arts. For example, the simplicity and orderly taste in the furnishing of the guest-room in a Japanese house has in a measure grown out of the arrangements favoured by these old *Cha-jin* (tea-men). The professors of these elaborate ceremonials were at the same time experts in all matters both of antiquarian interest and of art—in fact their teaching rather tended to confuse the two. Almost without exception either priests or disciples of the Zen sect, they favoured a stern simplicity in the surroundings. But this ascetic spirit was poles apart from the hatred of art as such of our puritan ancestors. Indeed, the cultivation of the æsthetic faculties was an essential element in their teaching, although the art they taught was a somewhat

¹ These rules were at the beginning, perhaps, based in a measure upon those of the old incense game, in which the problem was to discriminate between the scents of various kinds of incense burnt together or in succession. A description of this game may be found in the *Genji Monogatari*, a work dating from the Fujiwara period. It was much in favour, we know, at the court of the Ashikaga princes.

narrow one and hampered by many restrictions. Thus, in opposition to the teaching of the earlier Buddhist schools, the use of a vigorous scheme of colour was reprobated. The artists of the Zen school painted in Indian ink alone (*Sumi-ye*), or at most tinted their black and white drawings with washes of a few simple shades of transparent pigment.

I use the term Zen school, for this is indeed the name that best describes the movement. The leading artists were almost without exception priests of the Zen or Dyana sect, and to class them generally, as is often done, as of the Chinese school, or to call them after any single artist, is to miss the note of the most important movement in Japanese art,—the most important, at least, until the outburst of the ‘worldly’ school, the *Ukiyo-ye* of the eighteenth century.

The interest to us of this movement lies, as I have said, in the spirit in which the rendering of the landscape is approached. Of one of the greatest masters of the school we are told that before commencing a picture he would call for wine, then play a few notes on the *shakuhachi* (a kind of mouth organ), and recite a poem—he thus reached the state of meditation favourable to the creative impulse, and then, ‘like a dragon rejoicing in the water,’ he would fall to work. Similar stories are related of more than one great Chinese painter. It would indeed appear that what is told of that glorious old painter, Muh-ki—that he produced his best work when under the influence of alcohol—was not altogether an exceptional case.

To adopt the language of a modern school of psychology, the object aimed at was to promote the free activity of the subliminal consciousness. We must remember that, in all seriousness, there is much in common between this contemplative teaching and certain forms of western spiritism. Still closer is the relation of the latter to the kindred but more grotesque doctrines of the later Taoist philosophy,¹ which were also eagerly absorbed by the Japanese about this time. The Taoist hermit or magician, the wild-looking ascetic (*Sennin*), who can at will project his soul in the form of a mannikin from his mouth or let free a phantom horse from a gourd where he has kept it bottled up, is often difficult to distinguish from the Buddhist *rishi* or recluse. They both hold an important place in the *répertoire* of the Zen school and of the Kano artists, who followed at first in the same lines.

No doubt, among the later black and white painters of the Sung school and their Japanese imitators, there were some who fell under what we may call the 'literary heresy.' Among these 'transcendental painters' the object in view was simply the expression of mental conceptions and emotions. With this aim the brush-work became a sort of shorthand by which the artist sought to transfer his idea to others. But to the western mind the clue that should lead us into these inner arcana is often difficult to find. The critic may, how-

¹ To be carefully distinguished from the teaching of Lao-tse himself, the contemporary of Confucius, as developed in the Tao-têh classic.



TAOIST SAINT

Fayence with dark glaze. Probably Kioto ware. Sixteenth or seventeenth century

ever, console himself for his incompetence with the doubt whether in works of this nature the limits of true pictorial art have not been overstepped. (See on this head some remarks by Mr. To-ichi Tsumura, *Japan Society*, vol. vi. part 1.)

Of the artists of the fifteenth century who sought their inspiration from the Chinese masters of the Sung and Yuan dynasties (the *So-Gen* school of the Japanese), Josetsu and Soga Shiubun were indeed Chinamen by birth. Of the rest, the other Shiubun, the pupil of Josetsu, Oguri Sōtan, Soga Jasoku, and the great Sesshiu himself were priests of the Zen temple of Sōko-kuji in Kyoto. This temple was indeed the centre of the new movement.

There are two of the Ashikaga shoguns who have left a name in Japan as great builders and patrons of art. Yoshimitsu, in the earlier period (1360-1392), wasted the resources of the country in reckless expenditure on temples and palaces. Of more sober taste was his grandson Yoshimasa (1449-1471), a *cha-jin* and an artist of the Zen school himself. After his retirement, he gathered round him at Ginkaku-ji all the choicer spirits of the time. Here in the 'Silver pavilion,' in the centre of a small lake, Shukō, the Zen priest, first definitely organised the tea ceremonies. The gardens around were laid out by Soami, also a priest of the contemplative sect. The art of landscape gardening had been introduced by Chinese priests as early as the thirteenth century. By a skilful arrangement of rocks, water, and trees, the profoundest philosophical ideas

were to be suggested,—in the first place the balance of the active and passive principles in nature. Soami, himself an artist of distinction and the most learned connoisseur of the day, perfected the art. Every stone and tree called to mind, by a sort of shorthand, as it were, some principal of natural growth. (Cf. Brinkley, vol. ii. chap. vi.)

This famous garden of Yoshimasa still exists on the 'Eastern Mountain' of Kioto. Here the visitor may see the 'Silver Sand platform' where the Shogun used to sit and 'hold æsthetic revel.' The 'Moon wasting Fountain' is still there, and the 'Stone of Ecstatic Contemplation.' (Chamberlain's *Handbook to Japan*.) The pavilion itself, like its older prototype the Golden Pavilion of Yoshimitsu, is a very museum of the arts of the time—but both, alas! are sadly decayed and fallen from their ancient estate.

This artistic movement may be said to have culminated in the great painter Sesshiu (*circa* 1420-1506). He too was a priest of Sōkokuji and a pupil of Josetsu. Many stories are related of his adventures in China, which country Sesshiu visited in middle life. Here he studied the beautiful river scenery of the Yang-tse-kiang and the adjacent lakes. Summoned to Peking by the Emperor, we are told that with the aid of a broom and a bucket of ink, he, in the presence of the marveling court, rapidly sketched a huge dragon on a sheet of paper. He painted too, on a panel in the palace, a view of the great Japanese volcano, Fuji-no-yama. As to the paintings by Sesshiu that have come down to us

—and this is true in the case of others of the school—they are, with scarcely an exception, of the conventional ‘mountain, wood, and water’ type, founded on an idealised Chinese landscape. The charm of Sesshiu’s work is not to be grasped at once—his brush-work has little of the grace and balance that we associate with the Kano school. He forms indeed the link between them and the great artists of the Sung dynasty of China.¹ But he was at the same time an original and imaginative painter, and as a medium for the suggestion of vast distances by means of subtle gradation, the simple brush-strokes of Sesshiu have remained unsurpassed.

¹ It was the work of the great Chinese masters of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that was copied by the Japanese artists—not that of the contemporary Ming painters. In all these works the greatest attention was paid to the ‘values.’

CHAPTER IV

HIDEYOSHI AND THE TOKUGAWA SHOGUNS

The Portuguese and the Jesuits—Hideyoshi—The Tokugawa Régime—Architecture—The Kano School.

BEFORE passing on to the great Kano school of painting that dominated so large a part of Japanese art during the ensuing centuries, it will be well to turn for a moment to the political events of the sixteenth century, undoubtedly the most interesting period of Japanese history. This was a period of storm and stress that witnessed the rise and fall of many a strenuous fighter and crafty statesman.

The decline of the Ashikaga Shogunate was accompanied by fighting throughout the whole of the land. Kioto was more than once laid waste by fire. The Mikado and his court were reduced to absolute penury. The succession of events calls to mind in a way the last years of the Roman republic. In the first stage of the general confusion the names of the iron-willed Takeda of Koshiu and of Ota Nobunaga, great warrior and jovial, reckless boon-companion, stand out as predominant. Nobunaga fought against the monks and destroyed the old monastery of Hiyeisan (see p. 35) as well as the great Hongwanji temple at Ozaka.

Meantime the Portuguese had made their way to the seas of the Far East, and Jesuit missionaries were hard at work converting the people to Christianity. This is a matter that concerns us, for in the arts of the time not a few traces may be found of western influence. Scarcely more than traces indeed, for when, early in the seventeenth century, the Christian religion was stamped out and the country closed to foreign intercourse, practically all that remained as a result of the new teachings was the knowledge of firearms and the practice of smoking tobacco.

When Nobunaga in 1582 was slain by a treacherous lieutenant, his place was taken by Hideyoshi, a peasant's son who rose to become the greatest general that Japan has produced. A man of vast ambition, Taiko Sama, to give him the name by which he is best known, after he had subdued nearly the whole of Japan, marshalled his hosts for the conquest of Korea. That unfortunate country was ravaged from one end to the other. The skilled craftsmen, the potters above all, were exported in whole tribes and families. They settled for the most part in the western island of Kiushiu, founding there many new industries. But from the fire and sword of Hideyoshi's expedition the country has never recovered—we hear no more of the civilisation and arts of Korea. With Hideyoshi this was no doubt but a first step to the conquest of China, but his death in 1598 put a stop to all these ambitious schemes. His brief career is the most remarkable in Japanese history.

As a patron of art, the Taiko—so the Jesuits called

Hideyoshi—was remarkable for his love of profuse display. He was a great builder; the castle that he erected at Ozaka surpassed in size everything of the kind hitherto known in Japan. It became a model to future architects, and fixed the style of all the castles built during the ensuing centuries. The huge ramparts, lined with polygonal blocks of granite, are still there, but what remained until lately of the gorgeous palace that filled the inner enclosure (this was the palace described with such enthusiasm by our Will Adams in his letters home) was burnt by the Tokugawa party before their retreat in 1868.

Even more magnificent was the short-lived 'Palace of Pleasure,' built on a hill overlooking the Yodo river at Fushimi. It has indeed given its name—Momo-yama—to this period of art history.

The reaction at this time from the severe and restrained art of the later Ashikagas is everywhere apparent. Hideyoshi, indeed, can have had little sympathy with the refined and somewhat ascetic spirit of the *Cha-jin* (the cultivators of the *Cha-no-yu*). Sen-no-Rikyū, perhaps the greatest master of the art, who laid down the laws of the ceremony in their final form, was, it is true, patronised by the Taiko, but it is significant that Rikyū¹ was before long executed on a charge of treason and corruption. We are told of a gigantic meeting of the masters of the *Cha-no-yu* that was called together by the Taiko. In booths erected

¹ There is a very lifelike seated figure in lacquered wood of this famous *Cha-jin* in the British Museum.



SEN-NO-RIKYU
Lacquered wood

under the pine-groves of Kitano, near Kioto, the lovers of the art—peasants, artisans, and noblemen—assembled, each bringing with him the carefully treasured bowls and kettles with which to brew the infusion. Hideyoshi passed from booth to booth, drinking the tea and examining the antiquities. But such an assemblage, calling to mind one of our modern congresses, must have been strangely out of harmony with the spirit cultivated by the old *Cha-jin*.

Iyeyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa *régime*—the Bakufu that ruled Japan for the next two hundred and sixty years—was a man of a very different stamp to the Taiko. He was even more distinguished as a statesman and an organiser than as a captain. During the time of confusion that followed the death of Hideyoshi, the palace of Momoyama was burnt, and in the year 1600 Iyeyasu defeated the various parties that were leagued against him in the great battle of Sekigahara. Three years later Iyeyasu accepted from the Mikado the title of Sei-i-Shogun. Of the policy that his family inherited from him, this is no place to speak. The elaborately constructed political edifice, unique of its kind, survived with little change into our own day. When the western nations thrust themselves in upon this strange isolated organism they found it indeed in the last stage of decay, and the impulse from outside probably only hurried on a revolution that in any case could not have been long delayed.

I can only indicate in the briefest way the influence of this new *régime* upon the art of the country. At

first there was a reaction from the exuberant spirit of display favoured by Hideyoshi. Iyeyasu was a disciple of one of the stricter sects of Buddhists—the Jodo. It was the teaching of this sect that in this depraved world it was useless to attempt to attain to the consummation of the Nirvana. Rather by faith in Amida the spirit might find rest in his paradise in the pure land of the West.

This doctrine of simple faith in the Buddha was further developed by the Shinran or Monto sect, which before long obtained a predominant position among the population. The great temples of the Eastern and Western Hongwanji established by this sect in all the larger towns were, during this period, important centres of artistic life. This was above all the religion of the people. The military class favoured rather the practical teaching of Confucius, and developed from his teaching the stoic discipline of life known as the *bushidō*, 'the way of the warrior,' with its stern doctrine of self-sacrifice in the interest of the family and of the feudal lord.¹

All these teachings should have made for a strenuous, if not for an ascetic, way of life. But during this long period the tendency was, on the whole—for there were many reactions and back eddies—towards a life of easy

¹ It would perhaps be more correct to say that Confucius first put into definite literary form an older tradition of the duty of sacrifice to family and tribe (see above, p. 3). In like measure he gave his sanction to the doctrine that a man may not live under the same heaven as the murderer of his father, thus encouraging the practice of the vendetta.

enjoyment and a general relaxation of manners. On the part of the government there were attempts made at times to check the spirit of extravagance and display by means of sumptuary laws, and this even up to the latest years of the rule. Nor did the rigorous enforcement of the laws that condemned all classes except the Samurai to a state of political nonentity prevent even the despised merchant class from attaining to the influence and power that, even though unacknowledged, always accompanies wealth. Thus we find that a class who, in view of their position, and in face of the law, were little better than pariahs, became as time went on, and as they grew more wealthy and in a measure more cultured, the principal patrons of the arts. So that before the end of the eighteenth century the prevailing tone of the art of the country was for the first time an essentially *bourgeois* one. At the same time the enervating spirit of luxury that found expression in this art had begun to spread among the military class. This was above all the case in the new capital, and Yedo tended now more and more to absorb all the culture of the country.

It is necessary to bear these facts in mind if one would understand the spirit of opposition to this popular art movement that has prevailed among the upper classes in Japan. This was the case, above all, among the political groups—including both the reactionary party gathered round the old court at Kioto, and those supporters of the shogun, who merely favoured a reform of the government—that were

preparing for the great revolution of our day. It is undeniable that nearly all that was healthy and sound in the life of the country was centred in these groups. This is the point of view that finds favour with the contemporary Japanese art critic, and it sometimes calls up an expression of surprise, if not of indignation, from our European lovers of Japanese art, whose collections of 'curios' are made up almost exclusively with examples of this later 'worldly' school. What it is important to remember is that a certain taint of the theatre and of the Yoshiwara always hung about these exuberant developments of later Japanese art. It was not so much that they were vulgar as that they were the outcome of a decadent tendency opposed to the true spirit of the *bushidō*.

Before we take up again the thread of our art history—more especially of the history of painting—a word may be said of the new development given to architecture and sculpture by the great erections of Hideyoshi. Up to his day there had been little change in the general arrangement and decoration of the Buddhist temples. As in Fujiwara and even earlier times, the work of the sculptor had been confined to the actual figures of the divinities and their surroundings; for the rest, the decoration of the wall surface and the pillars was confined to coats of red paint or at times of lacquer. But in the great palaces of Momoyama and Ozaka a more ornate style favoured the application of elaborate wood carving to the architectural details. To this time we must probably attribute the introduction



WOODEN PANEL, CARVED IN OPENWORK AND PAINTED (RAMMA)
Probably seventeenth century

of the beautiful carvings of the *ramma*, the pierced frieze that runs along above the sliding panels that divide the rooms in a Japanese interior. It was above all in the buildings subsidiary to the Buddhist temples that the new school of sculpture found its chief application. Here on the massive *ramma* we find designs of fantastic birds or fabulous animals amid the rich foliage of the pæony or the chrysanthemum; these carvings are usually painted. Perhaps the earliest work of this kind that has survived may be found in some of the state chambers attached to the Western Hongwanji temple at Kioto (*circa* 1590). In these buildings we have a perfect treasure-house of the art of the time, and some of the finest of the carvings claim to have come from the Momoyama palace of Hideyoshi. There are other carvings in this temple that are attributed to Hidari Jingorō (1590-1634), the left-handed carpenter who became the greatest wood-carver of the day. At a subsequent time—probably after 1616—Jingorō carved some of the designs on the gateway of the tomb of Iyeyasu at Nikko. Who has not heard of his famous cat? It is indeed in the decoration of the tombs and temples at Nikko that this school of carving is best represented. Often astounding as a *tour de force*, and admirable in detail, it must be confessed that the general effect of work of this class is not favourable to the architectural *ensemble*; for the main lines of the buildings are lost in this maze of elaborate and involuted carvings.

The Kano School.—To the eye of the Japanese, the style of Sesshiu departed sufficiently from his more purely Chinese predecessors to allow of his being regarded as the founder of a separate school, a school, indeed, that existed for some time alongside of the great Kano Academy. This is, indeed, it must be confessed, a distinction not very readily appreciated by the western critic. Nay more! even in many of the works of the earlier members of the Kano school, there would seem to be little evidence of any departure from the old principles of the *sumi-ye* painters. Indeed, in the case of Masanobu (1424-1520), the earliest of the Kano family, whose long life ran parallel with that of Sesshiu, the Japanese themselves hesitate whether to place him in the new school, some reserving that honour for his son, the great Motonobu (1477-1559). But apart from individual mannerisms, there is no doubt a development of the skill with which the brush is handled as we pass from the earlier to the later of these two great artists. Mr. Morrison points to a good specimen of Motonobu's work in the British Museum as an illustration of the advance made by the founder of the Kano school. Compared with the older work, he finds in it a certain mitigation of severity, a subtler handling of the brush, with more elasticity and attention to detail. (See also the three kakemonos, British Museum, 1256-1258.) It has indeed been claimed for Motonobu that he was the greatest handler of the brush that Japan has produced. At the same time there is, no doubt when compared with Sesshiu, a notable loss of grandeur and

of directness of inspiration.¹ Motonobu studied the Dyana doctrine at the temple of Rei-un In at Kioto, where so many of his works are preserved. In these works the influence of the great masters of the Sung and Yuen dynasties is manifest.

Of all the art schools of Japan it is the Kano that was the most definitely organised. The school soon divided into a number of branches, and a perfect forest of names, many of great distinction, may be found in the Japanese art handbooks (summarised by Anderson, British Museum Catalogue). For two hundred years and more it absorbed nearly all the classical elements in Japanese art, but its members have little interest to us after the first two or three generations. The influence of this school upon the minor arts has been a continuous one—on the chisellers of metal in the first place—in a lesser degree upon the lacquer craftsmen and the potters. This influence has, above all, been brought to bear by means of the numerous designs by Kano men that from the early years of the seventeenth century onwards have been reproduced by the wood-cutter and published in little books especially for the use of the craftsmen.

It is interesting to find that Kano Motonobu married a daughter of Mitsushige, a leading painter of the Tosa school. The native Yamato painters still worked on the lines of the old traditions. Tosa Mitsunobu, the father of Mitsushige, was a contem-

¹ The work of Motonobu may be best studied in the reproductions published by Tajima.

porary of Sesshiu and of the earliest Kanos—by his energy he gave new life to the school. The Tosa men at the time painted both in the old large style and in the minute and decorative manner that we associate mainly with the illustrations of the Japanese literature of the Fujiwara period. They filled the whole page with colour, always brilliant and at times harmonious. One branch got the name of the 'roofless school' from their habit of ignoring the existence of roofs, in order better to illustrate the incidents in the lives of the court nobility and the priests as narrated in the old novels and poems.

In part as a result of the alliance with the Tosa school of their master Motonobu—he painted himself in the style at times—perhaps still more in consequence of the demand for gorgeous decoration upon the sliding screens (*karakami*) that formed the divisions of the rooms in the palaces and monasteries built in the time of Hideyoshi, we find a great change in the second generation of Kano men. Kano Yeitoku, the favourite painter of Hideyoshi, was the grandson of Motonobu. He was famous for his huge pictures of Chinese court life of the Tang period, both in *sumi-ye* and in colour. Distinguished, above all, as a colourist was his pupil Kimura Sanraku, in early life a page in the service of Hideyoshi. Sanraku was, perhaps, the first to make free use of gold as a decorative element in painting the walls of a chamber. Magnificent is the effect of the richly gilt *karakami* upon which stand forth his designs boldly executed in rich colours. To each room a

single subject—it may be a thicket of chrysanthemums or pæonies, or again ‘the thousand Cranes’ or a scene with a *mêlée* of armour-clad soldiery.¹

When Sanraku died in 1635 the great works that he left uncompleted on the walls of the temples of Kioto were finished by his son or son-in-law, Sansetsu. The latter artist favoured rather a return to the more restrained traditions of the Sung masters. Another pupil of Sanraku was Shōkwadō, an original painter with a scheme of colour of his own.

To return to the main line of the Kano family—Yeitoku’s son Takanobu was the father of three distinguished artists who dominated the artistic world during a great part of the seventeenth century. We may compare this group to the Bolognese school in Italy. The three brothers were the Carracci of Japan, while Sesshiu and the earlier Kanos may be compared to the masters of the earlier and of the *haute renaissance* respectively.

Tanyu, the eldest son of Takanobu, is perhaps the most representative member of the Kano school. An extraordinarily prolific artist, ‘his powerful dashing brush has always a character of careless care.’ (A. Morrison, *Painters of Japan*.) No artist’s work has been more often reproduced by the engraver, and his influence upon his successors has been only too commanding. How high was the estimation in which he

¹ I would point, above all, to a magnificent screen with gold ground decorated with lilies and convolvulus and to another with horsemen hunting. These are both in the West Hongwanji at Kioto, and they came, it is said, from the Momoyama palace.

was held by his contemporaries is proved by the fact, that late in life he was called upon to repaint the walls of the palace at Kioto which Kanaoka in early Fujiwara days had covered with pictures of sages. Tanyu died, covered with honours, in 1674.

Naonobu, the second son, was not less gifted than his brother, but as he died young his works are comparatively rare. While his brush was fully as vigorous as that of Tanyu, his paintings give evidence of a more refined nature and perhaps of a keener feeling for beauty.

Yasunobu, who is probably better known as Hogen Yeishin, was the youngest of the brothers, and he lived till 1685. Yeishin carried the principle of suggestive brush-work—that economy of stroke that leaves so much for the sympathetic spectator to fill in—to a greater length than any painter of the school. He was, it would seem, more in sympathy with the earlier Zen painters who followed the Sung tradition than were either of his brothers.

Both Tanyu and Yasunobu had numberless followers. They dominated the art world of the time, which now found its centre in Yedo rather than in Kioto. In the old capital the Tosa school maintained its position. After an interval of depression, during which the painters were living in great poverty at Sakai (on the coast near Ozaka), the school was revived by Tosa Mitsuoki (1617-1691), the most eminent representative of that delicate touch and high finish in the painting of birds and flowers which is often wrongly regarded as characteristic of the whole school.

Tanyu had among his pupils the Shogun Iyemitsu. But what is perhaps of greater interest, as proving the more and more important place taken by the minor arts as the century advanced, is to find that so many of his pupils made a name by the decorating of pottery or the chasing of metals. Morikage, his favourite pupil, made designs for the potters both of Hizen and Kaga, and another pupil, Tangen, did the same for the makers of the Satsuma faience.

I shall only mention one more of the strictly Kano painters before turning to the great decorative school that culminated in Kōrin. Tsunenobu, the son of Tanyu's younger brother Naonobu, has been praised by Mr. Arthur Morrison for his gift of omission—he knew, above all, how to 'spare' the paper, suggesting much even in the unfilled spaces. But, besides this, Tsunenobu carried on the decorative traditions of Sanraku, covering large wall-spaces with bold designs of pæonies and chrysanthemums. He survived till 1713, and is perhaps the last really great name of the Kano school.

CHAPTER V

THE UKIYO OR POPULAR SCHOOL

The Genroku Period—Kōrin—Itcho and Moronobu—Matahei
—The Theatre and Art.

THE history of the Tokugawa period (1600-1867) is, politically speaking, a singularly uneventful one. Apart from fires and earthquakes there are few striking events for the annalist to record. In 1657 the greater part of Yedo, including the palace, was reduced to ashes; in 1703 there was an appalling earthquake, followed by another conflagration.

But on looking closer we can see that, as in other countries, as one generation succeeded the other, changes have come about in the spirit of the people, and that these changes are reflected in the arts of the time.

It is the habit of the Japanese, in alluding to events in their history, to refer them to the *nengo* or year period in which they occurred. The period known as *Genroku* (1688-1704) is with them, on the one hand, a time during which the arts blossomed as never before or since, a time rich in painters and craftsmen of original genius, on the other a period of moral relaxation and

political misgovernment. Tsunayoshi, the fifth of the Tokugawa Shoguns (1680-1709), who began his reign as a strict upholder of the maxims of Confucius, had in old age become a capricious tyrant. He took the dogs of Yedo under his protection, and to slay one of them was a capital offence; herein unknowingly following the example of Barnabo Visconti, Duke of Milan. After that there followed in the period *Kioho* a time when a more strenuous life was in favour—it was a period of renewed Chinese influence. Yoshimuna, who became Shogun in 1745, was a reformer of manners, an economist and a protector of learning.¹ During his reign the Tokugawa rule is held to have reached the zenith of prosperity. But the two next Shoguns were mere *fainéants*, and it was again a time of evil rule and of famine. In spite of a brief effort of reform at the end of the century, the general tendency of the time was towards an increasing luxury. This was especially the case among the town folk of Yedo, and against this spirit the later Shoguns struggled in vain by means of sumptuary law. Thus as recently as 1840 the issue of coloured wood-prints was subjected to the most stringent regulations.

The *Genroku* period was, as I have said, a time of facile manners and of display; there was a rage for magnificent dresses and elaborate processions. From this time may be dated the first encroachment of the *bourgeois* element, that so profoundly affected the art

¹ Among the sumptuary laws enacted in his time was one forbidding the use of dolls more than eight inches in length.

of the country before the end of the eighteenth century. Then it was that the illustration of books rose to the position of an important art industry, a place taken ere long by the coloured wood-print. The *Ukiyo Riu*, the school of the 'passing world,' now coming into prominence, well expressed the prevailing spirit of the day.

But before passing to this popular school, we must say something of an art movement that is especially associated with the pleasure-loving period of *Genroku*. The members of the great decorative school that found its chief representative in Kōrin, were for the most part famous rather as craftsmen-artists, in lacquer above all, than as painters. According to Mr. Morrison, we must find the origin of this school in the Tosa painter Hiromichi, better known as Sumiyoshi Jokei, of whom Sōtatsu, one of the first great exponents of its principles, was undoubtedly a pupil. But Sōtatsu had been preceded by Honami Kōyetsu, who died as early as 1637. Kōyetsu has been called by Professor Anderson 'an admirable Crichton of the polite accomplishments of his age.' Although as a painter a somewhat mythical figure, yet there exist specimens of lacquer, attributed on good authority to the hand of Kōyetsu, which prove him to have worked on the lines that we hold to be especially characteristic of Kōrin—we see the design laid on in the same broad masses, and the same use of mother-of-pearl and various metals in the inlay. But it must be borne in mind that Kōrin was born some twenty years after the death of

Kōyetsu, and that the influence of the latter artist upon him could only have been indirect.¹

Sōtatsu was above all a painter of flowers, perhaps the greatest that Japan has produced. He was a magnificent colourist, laying on his pigments in thick rich masses. He studied also under Yeitoku, and may thus be held to have carried over the traditions of the Momoyama decoration.

Ogata Kōrin (1660-1716) is, with the exception of course of Hokusai, probably the name most familiar to us among Japanese artists. But his fame has come later than that of the great depicter of the 'passing world.' It has required the lapse of some time for the full appreciation of the genius of this eccentric artist. At the present day his style and even his mannerisms are copied by the workers in many various arts. Kōrin is a living influence not in Japan only, but in England and France as well. M. Gonse calls him the most personal of painters—the most Japanese of the Japanese. He seems to have visualised the outer world as masses of rich colour, which he proceeds to arrange in simple but fantastic patterns upon the surface to be covered. Kōrin is best known in England as a lacquerer, but at least a general idea of his style as a painter may be gleaned from the series of reproductions from his works that Tajima has recently published. There is a good kakemono by him (No. 2102) in the British Museum.

¹ When we come to treat of lacquer we shall see that the link between Kōyetsu and Kōrin is to be found in Sōyetsu.

If Kōrin as a craftsman is above all known for his work in lacquer, his younger brother Kenzan (much influenced indeed by him) is famous as a decorator of pottery. But of Kenzan we shall have to speak later on.

This powerful and original school of the Genroku period seems to have had little influence upon the later artists of the eighteenth century. It was reserved for Sakai Hōitsu, a man of good birth and the chief priest of the Nishi Hongwanji at Kioto, to resuscitate the style of Kōrin. Hōitsu had passed through both the Kano and the Tosa schools, he was an expert in all that related to his craft, and as a colourist was at least equal to the master upon whom he founded his style. He collected Kōrin's works and published many of them in woodcut reproductions. Hōitsu, who died in 1828, was the founder, or regenerator, of a school which has many representatives at the present day. Indeed, both his work and that of Kōrin have been for some time closely imitated—and this applies above all to lacquer.

As we have seen, towards the end of the seventeenth century the interest no longer centres in the painters of the Kano school. But as an academy their position still remains supreme. Nearly all the artists who were now making a name in new paths had in their youth served a training under Kano masters—many had passed also through the still older Tosa schools. Something of the same sort may be observed with us in England and in France. The classical traditions tend to survive in the academic schools—they cannot

be abandoned without throwing overboard the whole scheme of artistic training. So the pupils of a French *atelier* often take up in after-days a manner of painting entirely different from that of the master who taught them the rudiments of their art.

It thus happens that in Japan, in the time of which we are treating, it is often difficult to say to what school a painter belongs. Fresh tendencies were being brought to bear upon the artists. The demand for printed books, the increasing importance of the theatre, the introduction from China of a new realistic school delighting in strong colours, from time to time a glimpse caught of the contemporary art of Europe—all these influences were at work during the course of the eighteenth century, and they tended to submerge the traditions of the older schools.

Hanabusa Itcho (1651-1724), a restless spirit who expiated an imagined insult to the reigning Shogun by an eighteen-year exile in a distant island, painted above all scenes from daily life—this indeed was only what many of his predecessors, both of the Kano and the Tosa schools, had done. Itcho's work was not engraved till long after his death, but the many volumes of woodcuts published after the middle of the century have helped to spread his fame and his influence. There is something in the verve shown in Itcho's works, in the expression of action as well as in the delicate scheme of colour, that carries us back to the long-storied rolls of the Yamato painters of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries; but in Itcho's

figures there is a greater *abandon* and a more rollicking fun.

Another painter of this time who studied in succession in various schools was Hishigawa Moronobu (c. 1644 - c. 1713). In early life Moronobu made designs for dyers and embroiderers in the Tosa style. But his admiration for the work of Itcho brought him under the influence of the Kano school. Again, when later on he changed his name to Kichibei, this was an acknowledgment of his indebtedness to the old painter Matahei, of whom we shall speak directly. Moronobu is best known by the countless woodcuts executed after his drawings. Professor Anderson has enumerated as many as twenty-four works full of his prints that were published in the last years of the seventeenth century. In these woodcuts the rapid brush-work of the *sumi-ye* is admirably rendered. A large following of sons and brothers carried on the traditions of Moronobu.

I would here point to the immense difference between such reproductions executed during an artist's lifetime, in many cases from drawings especially made for the engraver (and therefore destroyed in the process), and the sketchy engravings after the great masters, especially after those of the Kano school of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which fill so many of the native art histories. These do not aim at giving anything beyond a mere scheme of the picture, and nothing has done more to give a false impression of the merits of the old Japanese painters than the reproduction in European books of these poor engrav-

ings as specimens of the work of the old masters. Let the student who has no opportunity of seeing the originals go rather to the careful reproductions by photography, or by coloured wood-blocks, to be found in the Kokkwa, or in the often-mentioned publications of Mr. Tajima.

These artists, Itcho and Moronobu—to whom we may add Ō-ōka Shunboku—although falling more or less under the spell of the new *bourgeois* spirit, were essentially Kano men. We must go back to the time of Taiko Hideyoshi to find the origin of the *Ukiyo Riu*, the style of the 'passing world.' I here follow Mr. A. Morrison, who in his scholarly articles in the *Monthly Review* has been the first, in Europe at least, to clear up this point. The difference, as Mr. Morrison points out, is more in style and in brush handling than in subject. The *Ukiyo* painters deliberately abandoned the delicate touch and the traditional handling of the older masters. They painted for the people—the *machi-no'sto*—from among whom they themselves for the most part sprang. They found their models among the actors and the courtesans whose fame they helped to spread. They painted the life of the people among whom they passed their days—many of them indeed seem to have been hangers-on of the theatre-teahouses, and haunters of the Yoshiwara (the courtesan quarter). Herein we are reminded of a certain phase of contemporary artistic life, but I cannot agree that the men of the *Ukiyo* school were realists of the type that we associate with Montmartre and Shaftesbury Avenue.

Their work, as all oriental work of any value, was still dominated by a feeling for style, by a somewhat narrow convention, and above all by a decorative spirit that rejoiced in rich and harmonious combinations of colour. Their power lies in a combination of these elements (which they found in their blood, so to speak) with a certain directness derived from the fact that, as I have said, they painted the life in the midst of which they moved and had their being. This it is that gives to the work of the *Ukiyo* school a certain *cachet*, that has appealed to so many of our painters, and which has found a reflection in so much of the western art of to-day.

That we must go back to the high and palmy days of Hideyoshi to find the origin of this *bourgeois* school is in itself characteristic. The Taiko was himself essentially a man of the people—as we have seen, a lover of display and of gorgeous ceremony. In his heart, probably, he had little sympathy with the restrained classical schools of his day. Iwasa Matahei was born as early as 1577, of noble lineage—his father had fallen while fighting against Nobunaga. In his youth Matahei must have seen the festivals and processions with which Hideyoshi celebrated his victories. Such scenes he painted in later life when summoned by the Shogun Iyemitsu to Yedo. Here he died in 1650.

Now there was in the next generation another painter of the name of Matahei. He lived at Ōtsu on Lake Biwa, and sold rapidly sketched caricatures to



KAKEMONO ON PAPER

Attributed to Matahei

the travellers that passed along the Tokaido. These 'Ōtsu-ye' became in later days a famous local production, the *meibutsu* of the place, to use the Japanese expression, and such works were still to be obtained not many years ago at a well-known shop standing by the highroad. Of no value as works of art, the Ōtsu-ye agreed in one point with the paintings of the older Matahei—like them they had an important influence upon the later history of one branch of the *Ukiyo* school; they formed indeed an early preliminary stage in the development of the famous coloured wood-prints of the eighteenth century.¹

We know little of the immediate successors of Matahei, those who bridge over the interval between him and the painters of the popular school who were working at the end of the seventeenth century. But in the early days of the Tokugawa rule there would have been little encouragement for such forms of popular art. Morikuni, and still more Itcho, had more of the Kano spirit than Matahei himself. But Miyagawa Choshun carried on the tradition in his brightly painted rolls, illuminated with groups of gaily dressed figures gazing at the spring blossom or picnicking under the maple trees in autumn.

We now come upon a group of painters who in the main formed their style upon a certain conventional rendering of the popular stage of the day. The

¹ The names of these two men are written with different characters although pronounced in the same way. It has been proposed to distinguish the earlier artist (Iwasa) as Matahei, the later (the Ōtsu man) as Matabei.

theatre during the course of the eighteenth century was coming more and more into vogue. Among the townfolk of the big cities, the actor, although in theory at least an outcast, comes to be a person of extraordinary importance whose name is in everybody's mouth. He before long gave the tone to the popular art of the day, and this not only in cases where a scene from the stage was represented, but in scarcely less measure when the work is an illustration of a novel or of the life of the Yoshiwara.¹ Even when an event from the old history of the country is depicted, it is viewed generally from this stagey point of view.

Now seeing that the output of this school of painters who fell under the influence of the theatre and of the Yoshiwara is known more by the rendering of their works by the coloured woodprint than by the original drawings of the artists, I shall postpone saying anything of these men until I come in the next chapter to speak of the craft of wood-engraving; this, for economy of space, and also because I think that, upon the whole, the work of this school found its fullest expression after passing through the hands of the craftsmen who engraved and coloured the blocks under the direction of the artist. Not but that one or two of these men acquired some distinction as painters of kakemonos—Kiyonobu, for instance, the earliest member of the Torii family, Sukenobu, who was indeed

¹ But see below, chap. viii. The rendering of the Yoshiwara world may perhaps be regarded as a separate style apart from, though closely allied to, that of the theatre.



KAKEMONO ON PAPER

Attributed to Shimman, Ukiyo school. Eighteenth century

trained in the Kano school, Harunobu, perhaps the most exquisite colourist of the lot, Yeishi, and not a few others. Of Toyoharu, the founder of the Utagawa branch, we are told that in the last decade of the eighteenth century, he was appointed superintendent of the restorations of the great temples at Nikko. He must then have attained to some position in the world of art.

But in the case of these men, the production of work not intended for the engraver may perhaps be regarded as a relaxation from the drudgery of the daily tasks set them by the publishers of the coloured prints, in whose employment they for the most part slaved.

There can be little doubt that this influence of the popular stage and the Yoshiwara tended, on the whole, to depress the art of painting, especially in the capital. After the death of the *Genroku* men, of Kōrin, Tsunenobu, Itcho, and Matahei—to mention only names representative of the various schools—there is, apart from these designers of coloured woodcuts, a gap, an absence of great names, until the rise of the Shijo school in Kioto towards the end of the century. The lists of the painters of this time that we find in the native art histories are endless, but no new development has to be recorded in the case of either of the two great schools—the Kano and the Tosa. The leaders of these schools, indeed, still preserved their official positions at Yedo and Kioto respectively, but these men have little importance for us. Of more interest is the work of certain artists more difficult to

class. The drawings that Tachibana Morikuni, a fertile artist, trained in Kano lines, provided for the wood-engravers have been made much use of by the later craftsmen. At the end of the century the versatile Tani Buncho (by origin a Kano man), an eclectic who founded a school of his own, is above all to be remembered for his success in renewing the tradition of the Zen school of the fifteenth century. Buncho studied the Chinese painters of the Sung dynasty, and he infused something of their poetical spirit into his landscape. Distinguished as he was as a colourist and as a painter in other styles, this is what interests us most in his work. We see in Buncho's paintings the old classical composition of Sesshiu, somewhat over-elaborated, it is true, but built up with a vigorous and spirited brush. Some of the best work turned out by Japanese painters of landscape at the present day is produced distinctly under the influence of Buncho.

Of quite another character was the new Chinese school of painting, whose style of work was spread in Japan by some talented Chinese artists settled in Nagasaki. These men belonged to a school that had inherited the deep, powerful colouring of the Ming period, but now paid more attention to the literal rendering of birds and flowers. We are reminded in some of their works of the gorgeous decoration on the contemporary Chinese porcelain of the *famille rose*; it was the style patronised by the cultivated Emperor Kien-lung. Into this Chinese school of painting a



THREE CROWS
Artist unknown. Circa 1700

certain European influence had already found its way, and at Nagasaki the Japanese artists who fell under its sway may have borrowed again in a measure from the works of European art that they saw at the Dutch factory. For although all communication with the foreign merchants was officially condemned, yet some occasional intercourse was, if carried on with tact and discretion, apparently ignored by the local government.

Jakuchiu (1716-1800) is a name that has recently come to the front both in the West and in Japan. There is a Jakuchiu cult that threatens to rival that of Kōrin and of Hokusai. The temple of Sōkokuji at Kioto, where thirty of his most brilliant Kakemonos are preserved, is the Mecca of his devotees.¹ Jakuchiu, who at one time sold vegetables in the streets of the old capital, studied first in the Kano schools, but on a sudden revulsion of feeling, he burnt his classical studies and devoted himself to the close rendering of nature. The cocks and the hens that he kept in his backyard are immortalised in his pictures. No Japanese artist has carried finish to a higher pitch, following in this, indeed, the contemporary painters of the Middle Kingdom.

¹ These works have now, I understand, been removed to the 'Imperial Household.' Mr. Tajima has lately devoted a special work to the reproduction of Jakuchiu's paintings.

CHAPTER VI

ŌKIO AND HOKUSAI

Ōkio and the Shijo School—Sōsen—Ganku and his School—
Hokusai—Later Artists.

THE school of painting that arose in Kioto in the latter half of the eighteenth century is the one that is best represented in our European collections of Japanese drawings. Of this school the greatest representative, if not the actual founder, was Maruyama Ōkio (1733-1795). Resting more than any other Japanese school upon a direct study of nature, the appeal is to us more immediate. That Ōkio could paint with distinction in other styles does not concern us here. In this case we must dwell rather upon what has caught the European eye—this is, indeed, the *bahnbrechend* part of his work. Flowers, birds, beasts and fishes—perhaps fishes above all—are rendered with a graceful and subtle pencil, with a charm of colour and with a certain inbred refinement of manner that disarm criticism. It will be noted that the careful accuracy and detail that in Ōkio's work is given to the main subject is not continued in the rest of the picture, which is treated as schematically as in the drawings of the older painters. The work of no Japanese painter

has been copied so extensively as that of Ōkio. Mr. Morrison will have it that of the seventeen works attributed to Ōkio in the catalogue of the British Museum collection, not a single one is genuine.

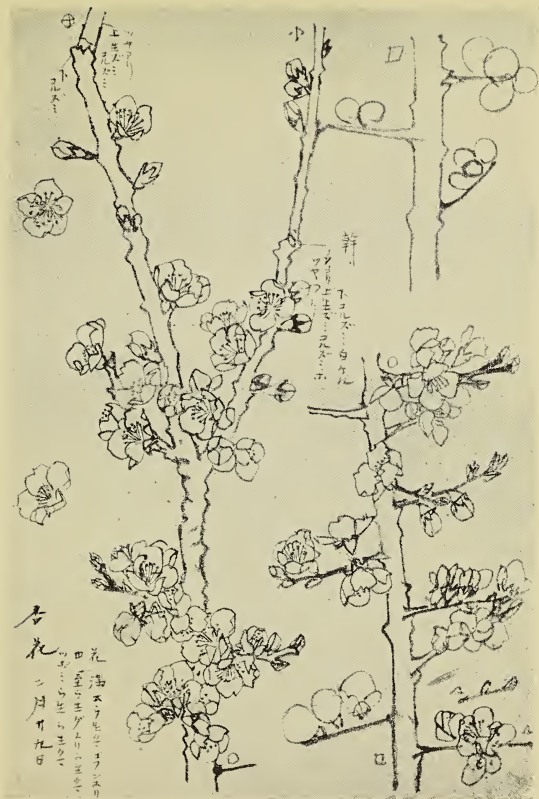
This is essentially a school that expresses itself in light washes of transparent pigment. The solid body-colours that Jakuchiu had inherited from the painters of the Ming and Manchu dynasties were for the most part excluded. But the Shijo artists no doubt learnt much from these earlier men, who were themselves careful delineators of birds and flowers. It is not a little curious that the Shijo school runs parallel, in time of origin, in culmination and in decline, with our great English school of pure transparent water-colour. In later days it has had no little influence upon European work.

The name Shijo ('fourth avenue') by which this school is known, is that of the street in which the studio, not of Ōkio himself, but of an enthusiastic admirer of the master, Gekkei (otherwise Goshun, 1742-1811), was situated, and here the earlier members of the school used to meet. Ōkio himself and his immediate successors—his son Ōzui and his grandson Ōshin—are often classed apart. They form the Maruyama school.

The Shijo and the allied schools are nowhere better represented than in the Mikado's palace at Kioto. Many distinguished members of these schools painted on the long lines of lofty karakami, the sliding partitions that divide the various apartments.

Mori Sōsen, the greatest animal painter of Japan (1747-1821), attached himself to the Maruyama school. Sōsen came early in life from Nagasaki and settled in Ozaka. Close at hand, in the woods around the fairy-like fall of Mino, or amid the wilder hills of Yamato, he was able to study the hardy little Japanese monkey, whose habits he has made familiar to us. Before the time of Sōsen, when a Japanese painter introduced a monkey into his picture, the animal was always of a fixed conventional type, based upon a long-limbed, hairy-faced species found only in China. Sōsen spent long hours in the woods, closely studying the ways of life of his friends—it is even said that he came himself to adopt some of their manners. Other animals, too, he painted—deer, bears, and hares. There is at South Kensington a large kakemono by him, with life-sized peacocks—it is dated 1786. As a painter of the fur of animals he is unsurpassed, and this is true both when Sōsen was working in his vigorous broad style and when in a more finished manner he rendered every hair with a fine brush.

Mori Tessan, who married a daughter of Sōsen, may be regarded as the founder of the Ozaka branch of the school of Ōkio—he also was a painter of animals. Tessan survived till 1841, and his later work shows signs of European influence. There are at South Kensington some working studies of birds and flowers, made directly from nature. In their way these drawings are unsurpassed, and they are interesting, above all, as showing the manner in which



APRICOT BLOSSOM

Sketch from nature. Circa 1820



the artists of this school collected their materials. In the case of the birds the actual feathers are attached to the paper for reference, and the sketches of flowers are supplemented by careful studies of the dissected blossom. In other cases we find 'nature prints' of the leaves—the colours were carefully painted on them and they were then pressed down on the paper. These drawings were bought in Ozaka many years ago, and they are probably the work of one of the painters of the Ōkio school.

Mori Ippō, a pupil of Tessan, as an impressionist painter of landscape in rapid washes, has scarcely received the attention that he deserves. In his best work he manages to convey a romantic sentiment that should appeal to us in the West.

Perhaps still more remarkable as a painter of pure landscape was Bunrin, who lived till as late as 1877. A painter of the Shijo branch, his rapid sketches may be found in numberless albums that have reached this country. He had, too, the honour of continuing the work of the earlier members of the school in the palace at Kioto. It is perhaps not fanciful to find something in his touch to remind one of his contemporary, our English David Cox.

The Shijo school is indeed represented in our English collections by innumerable artists, but I can only mention one other member, Hozen, an accomplished painter of birds and flowers—above all, of pure landscape. Many of his pupils are still working for the foreign market.

Kishi Dōkō, better known as Ganku (1749-1838), was the founder of a school that at first runs parallel to that of Shijo, and finally tends to merge into it. Ganku, a man of good birth, came from the province of Kaga. Trained in the traditions of the older schools, he carried on their methods of powerful if somewhat academic brush-work, while accommodating himself in choice of subject and scheme of colouring to the ways of the Shijo men. His technical mastery in the handling of the wet brush, full of colour, is unsurpassed. Among the Japanese Ganku acquired a great fame as a painter of tigers. He was the proud possessor of a tiger's head and skin, but there is no record that he had ever seen the beast alive. Work of this kind, however, does not appeal to us so much as does his rendering of birds and flowers.

Of the other members of the Ganku school I will only mention Renzan, the son-in-law of the founder. Renzan's work is not unfrequently found in English collections. Along with his master he worked in the palace at Kioto: a flight of wild geese painted by him in one of the apartments did much to spread his fame among his countrymen.

While during the first three or four decades of the nineteenth century in Kioto and Ozaka quite a troupe of accomplished artists kept up the high standard of Ōkio and Ganku, in Yedo, on the other hand, the popular school as represented by the designers of coloured prints fell into bad ways. The refinement

and delicate colouring of the earlier masters were lost, the ultra-stagey and sensational elements were more than ever prominent, and these were rendered in gaudy and coarse colours. It was amid this wreck of the old traditions that Hokusai rose to his supreme position. He was born in 1760, the son of a mirror-maker, in the northern suburbs of Yedo. As a youth Hokusai received some training as an engraver upon wood—a fact that should be borne in mind. His early work differs in no way from that of his contemporaries. He was trained as a designer of coloured woodcuts in the studio of Katsugawa Shuncho.¹ The graceful figures of tall, slim girls with small heads belong to this time; they are signed Katsugawa Shunrō. For the artist we knew as Hokusai signed his work with many other names. At this time the form of his name, like his style, was based upon that of his master. But Hokusai's nature was not one to be bound down to the conventions and narrow limits of the designers of coloured wood-blocks. His restless and inquiring spirit found an irresistible attraction in the rare drawings and engravings brought over by the Dutch merchants at Nagasaki, some of which found their way to the capital. The attention to perspective and the anatomical knowledge shown in these exotic works fascinated him above all; Hokusai, however,

¹ I treat of Hokusai here for obvious reasons, but to understand his position I must refer the reader to the account of his predecessors, the woodcut designers of the eighteenth century, given in the next chapter.

never succeeded in mastering the principles of either science.

The art of Europe was indeed attracting much attention at the time in Japan. It was not safe to proclaim its merits on the housetops. But although the matter was not openly spoken of, the new germs were none the less working insidiously.

Hokusai is said to have been initiated into the secrets of the western methods by a certain Shiba Gōkan, who, as early as 1780, learnt at Nagasaki the art of etching on copper, perhaps that of painting in oil as well. One account states that Hokusai for a number of years supplied the Dutch merchants at Nagasaki with albums of his sketches (where are these now!) until the traffic was stopped by superior order. Late in his life, indeed, he is said to have painted more than one picture in oil colours. In this connection may be mentioned the tragic fate of a contemporary of Hokusai, one Watanabe Kwazan. Kwazan's story, as told by Captain Brinkley, well illustrates the dangers to which those who adopted too openly the western methods exposed themselves. He was a man of the military class, and had learnt from the Dutch the principles of perspective and chiaroscuro—he painted portraits quite in the European way. Kwazan fell under suspicion, and in the year 1840 was compelled to perform *harakiri*. On the fiftieth anniversary of his death a commemorative service was held in a temple at Tokio, and this was accompanied by an exhibition of his works.

In the development of Hokusai's style this exotic element is not to be ignored. A certain grotesqueness and restlessness in his manner, which alternately repels and attracts us, have their origin in part in this ill-digested foreign science. In his books of patterns and designs for craftsmen this influence is frequently displayed. Hokusai had evidently turned over these and similar problems in his active brain. The matter is concisely summed up in the following saying that is attributed to him: 'In Japan we render form and colour without aiming at relief. In the European painting they seek relief and ocular delusion.'

A man of the people, a *frondeur*, Hokusai has that breath of genius that makes us ready to forgive a multitude of sins. A touch of fancy, an original grouping, at times a true dramatic feeling (as for example in the famous drawing of the mad woman), banish at once the feeling of disgust that the mannerism of, for instance, his ill-drawn animals at times calls up—it has been well said that even his birds have a vulgar expression. So inexhaustible are his verve and his interest in every phase of life that we forget to criticise the poverty of the brush-work, the monotonous touch that has been compared to a holly leaf, and that affectation of eccentricity that increased towards the end of his life. I can call to mind no European artist with whom to compare Hokusai, but there are some points in his character as expressed in his works that remind one of Charles Dickens.

Hokusai, as I have mentioned, had himself worked as an engraver in his youth, and by far the most important part of his artistic outturn was made for reproduction in black and white, with the addition at times of a wash of colour. What he produced in full colour—*kakemonos* and sketches for albums—has probably nearly all of it reached Europe. His colouring is forcible and somewhat original, but he paid little attention to the choice of his pigments. His tints are often muddy, and they show a tendency to a dirty brown.

It was not till his fifty-fourth year (1814) that the first volume of the *Mangwa*—‘miscellaneous sketches’—appeared;¹ the thirteenth volume of this work was not published till 1849, the year of Hokusai’s death; the fourteenth is a posthumous volume and undated. The full expression of his later style is given in his thirty-six ‘Views of Fuji,’ published as separate sheets. In spite of their mannerism, these are masterly works. Slighter and still more mannered are the hundred illustrations which were issued in book form. They are hasty works, full of fancy and caprice. In many of the drawings Hokusai amused himself by finding an echo to the double curve of the great cone in the lines of various homely objects in the foreground—he was, above all, concerned here with arrangements of curved and straight lines. But his rendering of Fuji itself is an utterly unworthy one. He appears to have had no feeling for the grandeur of the mighty volcano, so

¹ The preface to the first volume is indeed dated two years earlier.



THE SUMMER SHOWER
Woodcut after Hokusai. 1819

nobly rendered by many of the earlier artists. Hokusai was at heart a 'cockney,' but a cockney of genius.

After all, it is to find an epitome of the life of the Japanese people, expressed with fantasy and humour, that one turns to the innumerable volumes illustrated by Hokusai. Like Dickens he found an endless source of amusement in the world around him. Look at his studies of fat people, of thin people, of the blind in the volumes of the *Mangwa*. With what zest the characteristic gestures of each are noted—how thoroughly he enjoyed the humour of the scenes that he recorded.

Of quite another type was Kikuchi Yōsai (1787-1878), a man of good family and aristocratic leanings. In his most famous work, the rather tiresome *Zenken Kōjitsu*, we have portraits of some five or six hundred of the old heroes of Japan; among them the artist has drawn more than one of his own ancestors. There is undoubtedly a certain dignified serenity in Yōsai's figures. Originally of the Kano school, he also was in no small degree influenced by the art of Europe. For some reason or other, reproductions from his great work—figures in no way characteristic of Japanese draftsmanship—have been chosen over and over again as examples of Japanese art in the works of English and French writers on Japan. Perhaps the reason for this preference is that, in the drawing of the human figure, Yōsai made some approach to a European standard. He has had much influence upon the contemporary artists of Japan, both the painters and the sculptors.

Hiroshige (1797-1858), as a late member of the

Utagawa school of designers for coloured wood-blocks, should properly find his place in the next chapter. He was no original genius like Hokusai, yet as a landscape painter he occasionally shows a quite marvellous feeling for beauty of line. In his design Hiroshige caught the secret of the value of the 'repeated note'—the suggestion was at hand in the white sails of the fishing-boats upon the Yedo bay and in the tall trees that line the highroads. Hiroshige, too, must have studied the perspective of the western painters, and he was able to apply what he had learnt without any of the awkwardness and caprice that we see in so many of his contemporaries. The best account of the work of this charming artist is to be found in the books that Mr. Strange has written upon the history of Japanese chromoxylography. Mr. Strange has succeeded in separating the work of a second Hiroshige, an inferior artist, from that of his master.

The only other artist of these latter days that I shall mention is Kawanabe Kiōsai, who died quite recently. Kiōsai was a thorough Bohemian, and much of his work seems to have been produced while under the influence of *sake*. The vigorous gestures and the *abandon* of his figures—especially of his children—take us back to some of the best artists of the earlier days. In the illustration to the work in which he describes his wanderings and adventures in China, he gives a full career to his reckless pencil. Only too many of his drawings, however, are ruined and vulgarised by an attempt to imitate our western methods.

PART II

THE MINOR OR APPLIED ARTS

CHAPTER VII

COLOURED WOODCUTS AND ILLUSTRATED BOOKS

The Kakemono—Painting Materials—The first Wood-blocks—
Coloured Woodcuts—The Torii Family—Harunobu—
Shunsho—Utamaro—Toyokuni.

IN the rapid historical sketch of the art of Japan that has been given in the first part of this little book, the attempt has been made to catch here and there a glimpse of the spirit that informs that art. What are sometimes rather condescendingly termed the 'minor arts' of the country have now to be passed in review—some of them at least. And here, too, we must not neglect the point of view of the people for whose use or enjoyment the various objects were made. We must avoid as far as possible regarding them as mere curiosities or specimens for a European museum. To appreciate them, even on their artistic side, we must try to understand the part they played in the life of their original owners.

We have heard a good deal lately of the advantages

of the 'simple life.' Now, as far as their material surroundings are concerned, no people who have made any approach to civilisation have so well preserved the simplicity of life as the Japanese—unless, indeed, it be the ancient Greeks in their best age. I have no space to illustrate this point here. To do so would involve an account of the houses of the Japanese, of their social life, of their religious beliefs and of their superstitions. For information on all these and many other kindred subjects I must refer the reader to Captain Brinkley's monumental work on Japan, and to such books as Chamberlain's *Things Japanese* and Morse's *Japanese Homes*; above all, to the many books that the late Lafcadio Hearn has written about the people he loved so well.

It will be remembered that in the last chapter a large division of the *Ukiyo-ye*, or popular school of painting of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was either ignored or passed rapidly over. I propose now to treat briefly of the art of printing in Japan, especially of the printing from coloured wood-blocks. This will bring us again into relation with a group of artists belonging to this *Ukiyo* school whom we have so far neglected.

But before proceeding to this, it may be well—seeing that technical questions are more germane to this part of my book that deals of the minor arts—to say a few words of the materials used by the Japanese painter and the place that his pictures take in the dwellings of the people.

There could be no better illustration of the conservative instincts of the Japanese than the fact, that for the last thousand years and more there has been practically no change in the application and in the mounting of their paintings and drawings. The kakemono that we regard as the Japanese picture *par excellence* is mounted in a manner adopted, from of old, in China. The ornate variety of this mounting, with the *jiku* (the extremities of the rolling sticks) of copper gilt, elaborately chased, or sometimes of rock crystal, is now, as in the past, generally associated with the representation of Buddhist subjects. This form of kakemono differs in no way from that used at the present day in Thibet for the mounting of religious pictures. The quieter forms, with the *jiku* of ivory, simply turned, are, it would seem, later developments. The mounting of the secular kakemono has been, no doubt, much influenced by the teaching of the *Cha-jin*. It was the professors of the *Cha-no-ju* who, in later days, gave the tone to the decoration of the guest-chamber, and laid down the laws for the arrangement and choice of the kakemono that hung over the *toko-no-ma*, the raised recess in the corner of the room. In this recess alone, in a Japanese apartment, was there a place for a picture; and here at times a pair might be seen, or even a triplet, but in these cases always '*en suite*.' The greatest attention was paid to the choice and harmonious arrangement of the silk mountings of these hanging scrolls, and the selection of these mountings was assisted by books containing miniature samples.

What we have said of the mounting of the kakemono—the hanging scroll—especially of the adornment of the extremities of the rolling sticks, applies equally to the *makimono*, a roll that corresponds exactly to the *volumen* of the ancients. Some of the older *makimono* preserved in the temple treasuries are most sumptuously got up with mountings of silk brocade and with the *jiku* of precious material.

But the Japanese mounted certain kinds of paintings—more often famous examples of calligraphy—in frames of wood. These are the *gaku* that are placed over the entrance to an apartment, or stand above the sliding panels in front of the carved *ramma*. This frame is generally of black lacquered wood with mountings at the angles of gilt copper. On the walls of the long corridors of the old temple of Itsukushima, built on piles in a bay of the Inland Sea, may be found a veritable picture gallery of these *gaku*, perhaps the only thing of the kind in Japan. Many of these ex-votos—for such they are—are of great age, and when I visited the place some years ago—it was winter and the snow was driving through the apertures of the roof—I found that these old paintings bore the mark of long exposure to wind and weather. The ground of the pictures thus framed is often formed by the natural grain of the wood, and this grain is at times brought into relief by a special treatment.

So in the *yashiki*—the dwellings of the old Daimios and their retainers, attached to the castles—a beautiful effect was obtained by a boldly coloured design, often

in low relief, on large panels of richly grained wood.¹ Many years since I remember that I had my attention arrested amid the desolation and decay of the great castle at Wakayama by one of these gorgeously decorated door panels that still remained in position. In some cases the rough grain of the wood is richly gilt for a background, or again the wooden ground is covered with some kind of *gesso*.

The paintings on the sliding screens—the *karakami*—that divide the rooms of a Japanese house are generally of a simple character, the white paper background giving the prevailing note. More elaborate is the treatment of the pictures on the movable screens, whether on those of the ordinary folding form or on the solidly framed *tsuitate* that faces you on entering a Japanese house of any pretension. I have already noticed many examples where the screen forms the ground for some of the greatest triumphs of Japanese art.

Where an actual wall surface occurs—and this is for the most part confined to the angle of the room occupied by the *toko-no-ma* and the adjacent *Chigai-dana* (the set of irregular shelves)—this may be covered by a wall-paper of simple design. The pattern on this paper is often brought out by the application to the surface of a pearly coating of *gofun* (made from sea-shells, powdered and levigated—see below) that reflects the light at certain angles.²

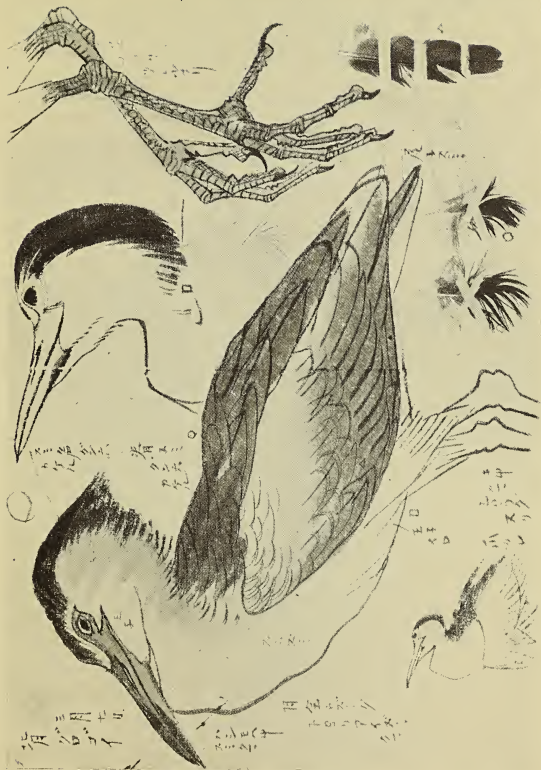
¹ Probably artificially produced by scouring with sand and water.—Ed.

² These arrangements may be well seen in a Japanese room brought many years ago from Ozaka, which is now erected in the Bethnal Green Museum.

It must be borne in mind that the paper used by the Japanese artist—and paper is after all the material on which most Japanese pictures are painted—is very slightly sized; to a European it seems little better than blotting-paper. It is needless to point out how greatly the technique of the painter is modified by this fact alone. The artist's rough sketches and his designs for the engraver are executed on a thin translucent paper of extreme toughness. When any correction is necessary, a piece of paper of the required shape is pasted over the part to be altered.

Painting on silk has for ages been practised in China, and for long the Japanese, when they used this ground, confined themselves to a special kind imported from China. It was only in the seventeenth century that a web suitable for this purpose was prepared in Kioto for the use of the native artist. The texture of the Chinese silk and the deep colour that it acquires in the course of time distinguish it from the *e-ginu* made in Japan. When painting on silk the ground is generally mounted like a canvas on a wooden frame, but when paper is employed the artist simply lays the sheet upon the mats, keeping down the four corners with extemporised weights.

The pigments made use of by the Japanese have little to recommend them. Much use was made of the already-mentioned *gofun*—prepared by an elaborate process of levigation from the shell of a kind of oyster. A similar material is often used as a grounding, and at times advantage is taken of the glitter of the minute scales.



NIGHT HERON

Study from nature. Circa 1820

Of the so-called 'Indian ink' used by the Japanese, the best quality comes from China; extravagant prices are paid for what may be described as 'historical pieces.' When an example of high quality is rubbed, a fragrant odour is given out. The better kinds of ink are prepared from the smoke of burnt camphor worked up with various gums. The commoner slabs are made by burning pinewood in a reducing atmosphere.

The blues and greens made from carbonates and other salts of copper are gritty in texture and difficult to handle. Many of the other colours—gamboge, vermilion, and ultramarine—are imported from China, and large prices are given for some of them.

Nor have the brushes employed by the Japanese found much favour with those European artists who have attempted to work with them. The pointed form, in which the hairs are set into the extremity of a cylinder of bamboo, is well known. But the broad sweeping effects of the *sumi-ye* painter are obtained by the use of wide flat brushes, cut away sometimes into peculiar shapes. By means of these some of the marvellous *tours de force* of the Japanese artist, as in the painting of bamboos, are obtained.

I have already in more than one place dwelt upon the important position given by the Japanese to the actual handling of the brush. It is the quality of this 'brush power' (*hitsu riyoku*) that first arrests the attention of the native critic in examining a picture or drawing. One writer on art, quoted by Captain

Brinkley, has enumerated sixteen styles of touch for landscape generally, and as many as thirty-six for details of foliage. For drapery nineteen manners of brush-work are described, and among these last may be found the 'swift waves' or 'holly-leaf' touch, which is accountable for a good deal of the mannerism of Hokusai.

The origin and development of the art of printing from wooden blocks has now to be considered. This is an art that, like so many others in Japan, came originally from China. For the early history we are still in the main dependent upon the learned paper contributed many years ago by Sir Ernest Satow to the Asiatic Society of Japan (vol. x.). We are there told that printing from wooden blocks was an art known in China at least as early as the sixth century. As far back as the eighth century of our era, the priests of more than one sect of Buddhists printed for their new converts in Japan portions of the Sutras on which their faith was based. Printing was indeed for long an art whose application was confined to the propagation and service of the Buddhist religion.

Again, in both China and Japan the printing of rudely executed wood-blocks representing Buddhist divinities was carried on by the priests, and some of these early blocks are still preserved in the temples. Thus a rough block of willow-wood treasured up in a monastery of the Nichiren sect claims to be from the hand of the saintly founder, who died in 1282. But

昨夜茅堂雨
北牖初輝映
交
聽歌外
採函
是
是里
歸家
山
迳
春
溪
來
蕨
引

本知良



月寫



SHOOTS OF YOUNG BRACKEN
Relief printing. Eighteenth century

we have to come down to a much later date before examples can be found of that combination of text and illustration that is above all characteristic of the books of Japan. In China illustrated books, chiefly of an 'edifying' character, were in use as early as the beginning of the fourteenth century, and in Korea not much later. But little of the kind was attempted before the beginning of the seventeenth century in Japan.

The Chinese made use of movable types from early days; the font was at first, it is said, of clay; at a later time it was cast in copper (? bronze). This metallic type had spread to Korea by the beginning of the fifteenth century, if not earlier. Many of the early Korean books, thus printed, doubtless reached Japan, but in the latter country no great use appears to have been made of movable type until the return of Hideyoshi's expedition from Korea nearly two hundred years later. Now it is a remarkable fact that little more than thirty years after this (*i.e.* about 1630) the Japanese abandoned the use of movable type and fell back definitely upon their old hand-cut blocks of wood. The dry, monotonous look that is so characteristic of the printed books of China was, it would seem, repellent to the Japanese taste.¹ The aspect of the printed page, to which we are now again in England giving some attention, has always, perhaps

¹ There may also have been economic reasons for giving up the use of movable type, but it is not necessary to enter into this question here.

instinctively, been an object of care with the Japanese. Nothing in its way could surpass the charm of the gracefully meandering *hiragana* character upon the pages of some of the editions of the old poets and romance writers. This is a point that has perhaps been somewhat overlooked by those who have written on Japanese xylography. Whether the printing of the illustration be in one or in several colours, we must not dissociate it from the text that is often so inextricably mixed up with it. To the Japanese eye the one is, even from an artistic point of view, as important as the other.

It was not until the period of Genroku (1688-1704), the golden age of the arts of Japan, that the engraving of wooden blocks, either for the illustration of books or for issue in single sheets, began to assume any artistic importance. And here we find, as is indeed so often the case in the history of the arts, that the vigour and the technical skill shown from the first start—in the reproductions of the works of Moronobu, to give but one example—has scarcely been surpassed in later days. But this work was all in black and white, or if coloured, the colour was added by hand. There arose a mania for the reproduction of the works of the great early masters of China and Japan. But such reproductions, as we have already said, are based on summary copies in outline only; they are mere memoranda for reference.

The early hand-coloured wood-prints are of importance, for out of them arose the great chromoxylographic



DOVE AND PLUM-BLOSSOM
Wooded after Morikuni

school of the eighteenth century. Single sheets now appeared with a prevailing yellowish coloration (the *tan-ye*) heavily laid on. In other cases—the *urushi-ye*—the lines are accentuated with black lacquer.

The Chinese before this time were acquainted with the process of printing in many colours from a succession of blocks; but in this instance what had been done by them appears to have had little influence upon the Japanese. In the case of the latter people we can trace the gradual steps by which, in the early years of the eighteenth century, they attained to such supreme mastery in the art. It was during a period of little more than a hundred years—say from 1730 to 1840—that was produced the wonderful series of coloured prints, the finer examples of which are now so eagerly sought after by collectors in Europe. Both in England and France the subject has become a cult—quite an extensive literature has grown up concerning these *nishiki* or *ichimai-ye*. Fifty or a hundred pounds are willingly given for a print that may perhaps have been originally sold for a few halfpence or even less. Of the place that these coloured wood-prints hold in the general history of Japanese art I have already spoken. The process by which they were produced has now to be considered.¹

During the latter part of the seventeenth century, as we have seen, there sprung up a group of artists who

¹ I am here chiefly dependent upon the writings of Mr. E. F. Strange, of the late Professor Anderson, and upon the already-quoted articles by Mr. Arthur Morrison in the *Monthly Review*.

worked above all for the engraver. The design was in the first place drawn upon a thin and translucent variety of paper (the *minogami* or *gampishi*) similar to that in general use for making rapid sketches. The engraver pasted this sheet *face-downwards* upon his block. There was thus in the print no reversal of the original design. The block was generally of cherry-wood cut parallel to the grain—not at right angles as with us. The superfluous paper might now, if necessary, be scraped off, to ensure a greater clearness for the lines of the drawing. In the case of the older work, at any rate, the borders of the outline were now incised with a knife, and the wood then removed from the spaces between by means of chisels of various forms. These processes, which were executed with marvellous accuracy and rapidity, may be followed in a series of wood-block in various stages of completion exhibited in the oriental galleries at South Kensington. It is perhaps in the actual printing—in the application of the moistened paper to the block, and in the manner in which it is pressed down upon it—that the skill of the workman is above all called into play. As in the case of our etchings, it is the degree of care exercised in the carrying out of these details that makes the difference between a good and bad impression. The paper is forced down upon the block partly by the pressure of the hand, partly by means of a disk made of a coil of hempen rope, for no press of any kind is employed.

We have so far been concerned only with a print

made from a single block, generally in black and white. But even in this case it is possible to render a gradation of tone in the original drawing by the careful application of the ink to the block. The engraving may in some cases be embossed in places by pressing down the moistened paper into hollows cut in an uninked portion of the block. This is a process used with great effect by the later designers of *surimono*, in this case in combination with colour.

But for the preparation of a normal Japanese colour-print the process is more complicated. The artist first prepares a design in outline only, and the print from this is returned to him that he may indicate the position of the colours. Other copies of these engravings in outline, one for each tint, are coloured where this tint occurs, and there only, by the artist. With the aid of these it then remains to cut a block for each colour. For the actual printing, each block—so we are told by Mr. Strange—receives its pigments in a dry state; the rice-paste medium is then sprinkled over it, and the mixture spread over the surface by means of a large brush. What has been said about the printing of work in black and white applies in even greater degree here. The merit of the finished work depends in great measure upon the care taken in the process, and the printer is perhaps on the artistic side a more important person than the engraver himself.

It was probably during the second and third decade—perhaps we should say rather the third and fourth—of

the eighteenth century that the advances were made that led to the fully developed *nishiki-ye*, the gorgeous coloured print of the second half of the century. At first there were blocks for black, red, and green alone; these were the *beni-ye*, the 'rouge' pictures, so called from the predominance of the red pigment. After this a fourth and a fifth block for the blue and yellow tints were added, and by the superposition of the primary colours further tints were obtained without increasing the number of the blocks.

The earlier of these advances are associated with the name of Torii Kiyonobu; he was working in the thirties and forties of the eighteenth century, and was the founder of a school that devoted itself almost entirely to theatrical subjects. Both Kiyonobu and his brother Kiyomasu were influenced by Moronobu, the great designer in black and white. These men we may regard as the pioneers; they were followed by Torii Kiyomitsu, who worked in a softer and more graceful style. It was he probably who first added a third colour, some time between 1740 and 1750.

By the year 1760, but hardly much before, we may regard the colour-print as fully developed. It is now that a new direction is given to the art by Suzuki Harunobu. This refined and somewhat effeminate artist, who was working between 1760 and 1780, was a superb colourist, and the engraver and printer were now in a position to reproduce the most elaborate chromatic combinations. Harunobu turned from the strenuous figure of the popular actor of the day—he

took his motives rather from the courtesan quarter. There is a special charm in the grace and refinement of his female figures, but the exaggerated smallness that he gave to the hands and feet strikes a note of artificiality, if not of decadence.

It was during a period of about half a century, say between 1760 and 1810, that the finest work was turned out. But the artists were now divided into several distinct lines, we can hardly call them schools, for although certain names—Torii, Kitao, Katsugawa, Utagawa, Kitagawa—occur over and over again, there is little continuous tradition to connect the style of each line of craftsmen. The main division is rather between those who drew their inspiration in the first place from the theatre, and those whose subjects were taken mostly from the Yoshiwara. In the case of the theatrical school it was not necessarily always an actor who is depicted, but the scene represented is viewed from a stagey point of view. A tragic interest, often quite 'in Ercles' vein,' predominates, and if women are introduced into the composition, the female type is taken from the male actors who played the parts of women on the stage. So, on the other hand, if we turn to what may be called the courtesan school, the scene need not be always taken from the Yoshiwara, but in the picture the male parts are played, more or less unmistakably, by women. The graceful groups of girls are engaged in various occupations, domestic or even mechanical, or again we have a travesty of some historical scene, and even here the slim figure and the

somewhat feline charms of the girl actors take us back to the Yoshiwara.

These coloured wood-prints were issued mostly in single sheets—*ichimai-ye*—of a uniform size; sometimes the subject required two or even three sheets, rarely more. These *ichimai-ye* were often bound up in the form of a *orihon*, a book that opens out like a folding screen. There are other prints that take a long slim form; these are the *hashira-kake*, destined to be affixed to the *hashira*, the post that stands at the angle of the *toko-no-ma*. The work of Kōriusai (Isoda Shobei), a man of some social position, and the most distinguished of the pupils of Harunobu, often takes this latter form. Another of the pupils of Harunobu was Shiba Gōkan, who painted in the so-called Dutch manner (*Ran-gwa*) and made engravings (probably etchings) on copper. (See p. 92.) Of Utagawa Toyoharu, also, it is related that he painted in oil in the European style. Toyoharu, who was employed in the restoration of the temples of Nikko, was the master of the prolific Toyokuni. It would seem that a certain amount of social discredit was attached to the adoption of European methods. Of Shiba Gōkan we are told, that it was his want of success when working in the school of Harunobu that was the cause of his leaving his master's studio and falling into the uncouth ways of the western barbarians at Nagasaki. It would appear, too, that he frequently copied the signature of his old master. The native critics evidently look upon him somewhat askance.

There were others whose work took more often the form of illustrations to books. Mr. Morrison, no mean judge, calls attention to a book of this class by Tachibana Minko as a work unsurpassed in its kind. This is the *Saigwa Shokunin Bumi* that treats of the occupations of craftsmen; it was published in 1770.

Katsugawa Shunsho (called *Tsubo*, 'the Jar,' from his seal, imitated from the Kano painters) is perhaps the only artist of what we may call the middle generation (1760-1780), whose work is well represented in our collections—he must have been a very prolific designer. Although the actor figures largely in his drawings, Shunsho takes a place, on the whole, not far from Harunobu, whom he resembles too in the exaggerated smallness of his hands. Both Shunsho and more than one of his pupils paid great attention to the expression of the face—violence of emotion is indicated by the contortion of the mouth. Among his pupils was Shuncho (in truth a follower rather of Kiyonaga), who was, as we have seen, the early master of Hokusai.

Tōshiūsai Sharaku, famous as a *Nō* dancer (see below, chap. xi.), carried the exaggerated rendering of the dramatic emotions to a further point than any other artist before or since. His busts of grimacing actors (noticeable for their silver backgrounds) command attention by their frankness and brutality. But Sharaku was a true and original artist, for all his eccentricity.

There is another designer of coloured prints who stands somewhat apart. This is Kubo Shunman,

whose *nom-de-plume*, Nandaka Shiran ('I've no notion what') calls to mind the mottos of Rabelais or Montaigne. In the laying out of his quaint designs there is at times something in common with the work of Kōrin.

During this middle period the Torii line was represented by Kiyonaga, the fourth in succession of the family. Kiyonaga, who lived on till 1815, was a prolific artist, who illustrated many books, and drew the subjects of his *ichimai-ye* from both actors and courtesans. He was perhaps the most popular artist of the day, and his influence on his contemporaries was commanding.

We now come to one of the most famous names among the designers of coloured prints. Kitagawa Utamaro was born in 1754, the son of a painter of the Kano school. Trained first in the classical traditions, Utamaro, like so many of his contemporaries, fell soon under the influence of Kiyonaga, and passed to the popular school. This involved a certain social degradation, and a breach with his father and his old friends. The young artist now fell into a Bohemian way of life among the actors and courtesans who served as his models. Shortly before his death in 1806, he had suffered a term of imprisonment for a lampoon that was held to reflect upon the private life of the reigning Shogun. Utamaro's works have found favour, not only in France, where he has been made the subject of a separate study by Edmond de Goncourt, but (and this even in his lifetime) among the Dutch at Nagasaki.

Many of his prints, too, found their way to Canton, and were there copied by the Chinese. One reason of this wide popularity may possibly be found in the fact that Utamaro gave more attention than perhaps any other Japanese artist to the rendering of the nude. In his bath-house scenes and elsewhere, he succeeded in giving a sinuous if somewhat evertibrate grace to the female figure that we may seek for in vain elsewhere.

But besides such work, Utamaro turned out many sumptuous books with coloured drawings of insects and flowers (pæonies especially) somewhat in the style of the Shijo school. His landscape work has found favour among the native critics—so Mr. Strange tells us. For us the importance of Utamaro lies in this, that we find in his work the very quintessence of the school to which he belonged—above all a treatment of the female figure at once sensuous and conventional.

In the relation of Utamaro to his publishers, we are reminded of his contemporary the English Morland. In later life he became almost a slave in their hands—always in their debt, in spite of the comparatively good pay that he received for his innumerable designs.

Of Utamaro's contemporaries and rivals, the most eminent was perhaps Chobunsai Yeishi—for Toyokuni belongs rather to the next generation. Yeishi was a man of gentle extraction, and, like Utamaro, was trained in the Kano school. In fact he was distinctly a *déclassé* who never quite accepted his new position. Thus we find that already in middle life (this was about 1800) he gave up the designing of coloured

prints, although he continued to paint kakemonos in the *Ukiyo* style. The work of Yeishi is easily recognised by the subtle flowing lines of his tall figures, and by a prevailing tint of lemon-yellow. In his later work we see the influence of Hokusai.

Although Utagawa Toyokuni (1769-1825) was, during the earlier part of his life, a rival and an imitator of Utamaro, he belongs, as I have said, on the whole to the next age. He was, perhaps, the most prolific of all the designers of coloured prints, and (apart from Hokusai and Hiroshige, whom we have regarded as outside the group) his is the last really great name on the roll. Toyokuni, although of plebeian extraction, and essentially a member of the *Ukiyo* school, acquired some social position, and at his death a monument was raised to his memory; what is still more strange, we are told that many hundreds of his drawings were buried with him. Toyokuni appears to have been a shrewd man of business, but that he should have been able to hold his own among his social superiors is, perhaps, a sign of the relaxation of manners at this time. He went to the theatre, for the most part, for his subjects, and if in early life he worked in rivalry with, and even copied, Utamaro, no artist has found more pupils and imitators. In fact, it is not too much to affirm that more than half of the cheaper kind of colour-prints that have flooded the European market, whether in loose sheets or bound in books, bear the signature of one or other of Toyokuni's followers. Of these it may, as a whole, be said that in spite of the

interest to be found in the subjects, and still more, perhaps, in the accessories, they are of little artistic value—there is, above all, a marked falling-off in the delicacy of the colour and in the mechanical excellence of the printing. The decline began indeed before the death of Toyokuni, whose later work had already lost much of the charm of the eighteenth-century masters.

The greatest of the followers of Toyokuni was certainly Kunisada, who—as late as 1844, it is said—took the name of Toyokuni the Second. This is a signature to be found on innumerable coloured prints.

Utagawa Kuniyoshi, who did not die till 1861, was another prolific pupil of Toyokuni. But he was influenced by other masters—at one time he was a pupil of Zeshin, the great lacquer artist—and it is characteristic of the time that Kuniyoshi, who led a life of dissipation in company with actors and writers of comic novels, fell under the spell of the art of the West, as represented, it would seem, by Dutch engravings.

In its last phase this school of illustration came into association with Ozaka, the rich commercial city, whose busy theatres and tea-houses on the Dotombori Canal rivalled those of Yedo. But the work of the Ozaka men is for the most part coarse, and it is distinguished by the prevalence of an unpleasant mustard-yellow tone. One characteristic of this Ozaka school is the practice of dusting on spangles of metallic particles—gold or silver—as a background to the portraits of actors.

The blocks of many of these late *ichimai-ye* have been printed from again and again (some of them have been recut, it would seem more or less summarily), each time with greater exuberance of colouring. The resources of western civilisation, in the shape of aniline pigments, were now within the reach of the wood-block printers, and the end was come.

But we must not exaggerate in this general condemnation of the later coloured prints, seeing that much of the work of Hokusai, and the whole of that of his followers, falls within this period. There is a great charm and refinement in many of the later *surimono*, above all in those with embossed work in relief by Hokkei, Gakutei, and other pupils of Hokusai. Some of these 'New Year Cards' were privately printed for distribution among friends, and on these we at times find representations of the vessels used in the new Chinese form of the *cha-no-yu* that came into fashion at the beginning of the century. It may be here noticed that this last phase of the influence of the Middle Kingdom brought with it a taste for Chinese furniture, and above all for a certain kind of glazed earthenware, a taste that has left its mark in many a Japanese interior even to the present day.

Again, there was in some respect an advance made in the treatment of landscape during the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century. There sprung up a demand for the reproduction of actual scenes. The topography of the main roads—the posting towns, the passage of rivers and other incidents



LAKE BIWA—FISHING BOATS AND WILD-GEESE
Colour-print by Hiroshige

of travel—was illustrated in an endless series of coloured prints, the views of the fifty-three stations on the Tokaido being the most popular. Hiroshige, of whom we have already spoken (p. 95), is the greatest name in connection with such productions. He did, too, much other excellent work for the colour printers—witness the magnificent series of fishes, of which there is a fine set in the British Museum.

So in the department of book illustrations in black and white, the *Meisho Dzuyé*, 'views of famous places'—in Yedo or Kioto, or along the main roads—are characteristic of the time. Some of these, indeed, are of earlier date, and Shunchosai, the best known name in this department, was already at work by the beginning of the century. I need not say that such illustrations are an invaluable source of information for the life of the people in the years that preceded the opening of the country to Europeans.

CHAPTER VIII

METAL WORK—PART I. HAMMERED AND CHASED

The Forging of Iron—The Furniture of the Sword—Alloys and Patina—The Tsuba—The Gotō and Miōchin families.

IN the treatment of metals, by hammering, chasing, or casting, the Japanese stand pre-eminent among all other nations. I here enter into a department of Japanese art where the amount and variety of the material to be treated is simply overwhelming—it will therefore be necessary for me to restrict myself to a few of the most important branches.

If I speak first of the forging, hammering, and chasing of iron, it is because in Japan the place of honour must be given to this metal. To the sword, from the earliest times, a peculiar pre-eminence, we might almost say a sanctity, has been attached by the Japanese. The sword extracted from the tail of the eight-headed dragon slain by Susano-ō, the brother of the Sun Goddess, forms part of the Sacred Regalia of the Empire,¹ and a famous blade, forged by Masamune,

¹ It is rather disappointing to find that the weapon extracted from the dragon's tail is a double-edged sword-blade of the Chinese type (*ken* or *tsurugi*). As we have seen, the swords found in the dolmen tombs, and none can be earlier than these, differ little as far as the blades are concerned from the well-known typical sword of the samurai.

held a somewhat similar place in the family traditions of the Tokugawa Shoguns. The forgers of sword-blades have always taken a social position far above all other craftsmen—the forging itself was in old days accompanied by certain religious ceremonies to ensure the favour of the gods. The Emperor Gotoba (end of twelfth century) is himself said to have forged a sword.

In treating of the forging of iron for warlike purposes, seeing that we are only concerned with the artistic side of the craft, there is no need to go further back than the twelfth century. At that time it would seem that more care was given to the decoration of the armour than to the furniture of the sword. The armour worn by the national hero Yoshitsune, who was slain probably in 1189, is preserved in a temple at Nara; the helmet, the shoulder-pieces, and other parts, are ornamented with the most delicate work—birds and flowers, for the most part, repoussé and applied. There is in the decoration of this armour nothing of the stern simplicity that we might look for in the art of these warlike times, rather a tendency to exuberance and richness of detail. Such a treatment was perhaps an inheritance from the luxurious days of the Fujiwara rule.

Expertise in judging the merits of a blade is itself a special branch of Japanese connoisseurship; the most renowned experts have handed down their traditions from father to son. The family of Honami, so distinguished in other branches of art, has since the

time of Hideyoshi above all held a prominent place as experts in the judgment of sword-blades.

The secret traditions (*hiden*) thus passed on from master to pupil have played an important part in the history of the minor arts of Japan. We hear much of the *okugi*, the 'inner mysteries,' and of the *hijutsu*, the 'secret art.' (See the article on 'Esotericism' in Chamberlain's *Things Japanese*.) On the possession of these craft secrets the divisions of the various schools are in a measure founded. In some cases there is a sort of religious sanction, and we come again into contact with the tenets of some of the Buddhist sects. By such ideas the sense of dignity, and what we may almost call the feeling of moral responsibility, of the craftsmen were fostered. The self-effacement of the apprentice in the interest of his master was demanded of him, no less than a complete devotion to his task; so, again, the constraint put upon the master to avoid any style of work that would be derogatory to the traditions of the school that he represented maintained a high standard in his work. This constraint may indeed at times have had a numbing influence upon any tendency to originality in the workman. There is more than one instance of an artist, afterwards famous in his own line, being expelled from the studio or workshop in which he was serving his apprenticeship on the ground that his innovations were likely to injure the reputation of the school. A man so expelled was under a certain social stigma. He had in any case to start afresh in life.

THE SWORD.—The great *tachi*, the double-handed sword, need not detain us; little artistic decoration is lavished upon this eminently practical weapon. Of the two swords carried by the samurai, the larger, the *katana*, is the sword *par excellence* of the Japanese; the smaller, the *wakizashi*, is of interest to us as the weapon with which the operation of *seppuku* or *harakiri* was performed.

With the forging of the blade and the welding of it to the cutting edge of harder metal we are scarcely concerned here. Of greater interest to us are the various appendages that may be classed under the name of sword furniture. Upon the decoration of these parts, the richest fancy and the most exquisite handling have been lavished by a succession of distinguished craftsmen during the last three or four centuries. The furniture of the sword, indeed, in old days, took in a measure for a Japanese samurai the place of jewellery among Europeans. In the case of many a wandering *ronin* the two swords that he carried by his side constituted by far the larger part of his total worldly capital.

The variety of motive, the rich gamut of colour obtained by the use of various alloys and patinas (together with the moderate and uniform size of the objects themselves), these among other causes have led to the Japanese sword-furniture finding great favour with the European collector—the guards of the swords (the *tsuba*), above all, have been brought together in large numbers. The attempt is then made by the

collector at classification on one system or another. But the western connoisseur is surprised to find, in consulting the standard Japanese works on the subject, how little either his system of classification or his standard of merit has in common with that adopted in the land where these sword ornaments were produced.

In the case of the Japanese connoisseur it is not so much the interest or the quaintness of the subject that appeals to him. He knows that the craftsman has gone for his designs to the collections of motives provided for him by many a talented artist. What he is interested in is rather the traces of the actual handling by the craftsman of his tools—whether chisel or graver. A healthy instinct has taught him to search, in a work of art, for the signs of the hand that has produced it. He seeks for the traces of the very play of the muscles that have directed the chisel. How the hand should be guided, in the case of a true master, not by the active and conscious interference of the brain, but by something that we may perhaps call the ‘subliminal consciousness,’¹ something that only comes into play when complete command of the craft has been attained, this I have dwelt upon in an earlier chapter (see p. 8). It must be remembered that this is the fundamental point of view, the definite principle that has guided all the best native criticism, and to thoroughly under-

¹ I do not pretend that this is exactly the meaning given to the expression by the late Mr. Myers. The point of interest is that the Japanese appear to have found in the complete mastery of his craft by a great master—in the almost unconscious working together of hand and brain—something of a ‘subliminal’ nature.

stand and appreciate a Japanese work of art, some attempt must be made to put oneself into the mental attitude of the Japanese connoisseur.

To distinguish the various parts of which a Japanese sword is built up, the student is advised to take such a sword to pieces. This is readily effected by pushing out the little plug of wood that passes through the lower part of the hilt. The blade will now fall out, and on the tang the name of the forger of the sword may often be found. The guard (*tsuba*), the part that will probably interest him most, will at the same time be loosened, and perhaps also the richly decorated ring above it (the *fuchi*). At the other extremity of the grip the *kashira* forms a cap to the hilt; the decoration of this cap is invariably in keeping with that on the ring, and it will be noticed that the most delicate work is generally reserved for these two pieces—the *fuchi-kashira*. On either side of the *grip*, bound on by the cordage or 'frapping,' will be found a little device in metal. The *menuki* (literally 'rivets'), as these detached objects are called, are as a rule chased with the most minute finish.

We come now to certain appendages that generally accompany the scabbard of the *wakizashi*, or smaller sword. On one side there is the *kodzuka*, a little knife, of which the projecting haft gives a field for the most varied decoration, on the other the *kogai*, a single or double skewer. It is amusing to notice the various explanations that have been given of the use to which the *kogai* was put. I find the following: (1) It was

used to stick into the decapitated head of the enemy, for the future identification of the slayer; (2) it served to carry this same head; (3) it served as a hairpin to fasten on the official cap; (4) it might be used to scratch the head; (5) or, finally, the double form might be employed as chopsticks.

This exhausts the parts of a sword that serve as a field for decoration—*tsuba*, *fuchi-kashira*, *kodzuka*, *menuki*, and *kogai*—I give them in their order of importance. Of the other parts of the sword-furniture which appeal less to the collector, there is no need to speak.

Now, before we attempt to describe the various methods of decoration that have been applied to the furniture of the sword, it will be necessary to break off for a space to say something of the metals and alloys that are called into use, and also of the methods by which the surface of these metals is made to assume various tints, by exposure to heat and to the action of acids and alkalis.

At the beginning little else than iron was employed, and indeed for the *tsuba* this metal has always played the principal part. A remarkably pure and soft variety of wrought-iron is selected, free, above all, from sulphur; indeed, on analysis, it is found that the impurities in this iron seldom amount to more than one part in the thousand. The wavy and stringy markings that we sometimes see on the surface are caused by the welding together of iron of different qualities and subsequent treatment with acids. More often a smooth but not even surface, as of some waxy material, is preferred.

Next to iron, the most important part is taken by a number of alloys, in which copper is the predominant element; this is true, especially, for the *fuchi-kashira* and the *menuki*, less so for the *tsuba* and the *kodzuka*—for them iron has always been the most important material.

Now, the importance of these alloys to the Japanese craftsman depends, above all, upon the beautiful and varied tints and textures that they enable him to give to the surface of the metal. This is effected in most cases by the removal of one or more elements of the alloy, less often by the addition to it of an element. This question of the patinated surface is a most important one. We shall come across it again when treating of the bronze castings in the next chapter. It is the despair of our European workers in metal who have attempted in vain to imitate the effects obtained by the Japanese.

For the present we can only say that, whether in the case of a sword ornament or of a bronze casting, the result is for the most part obtained by alternate heatings and picklings in various solutions, followed by careful cleaning and brushing of the surface. This kind of patina—the result of an artificial treatment of the surface of the metal—must be distinguished, on the one hand, from the natural patina that may be formed by the gradual action of the atmosphere, and on the other from the various hard varnishes that are occasionally applied to the surface of bronzes and other alloys. The first of these—the action of the air—plays an

important part in bringing about the beautiful surface that we find on old bronze vases; the second plan is indeed employed at times by the Japanese, but the presence of the thin coating of varnish is often very difficult to identify. Akin to the last is the use of lacquer as a more or less transparent coating to a metallic surface.

Pure copper, if applied to decorative purposes, may retain its natural colour, or by the partial oxidation of the surface a brilliant lobster-red tint may be produced. By alloying the copper with various amounts of tin, lead, and zinc, various hues are obtained. But the Japanese prefer the pale, delicate tint of the *sentoku* (so called from a Chinese emperor of early Ming times, in whose reign an alloy of this nature was in favour), which contains all three of these metals, to the more pronounced yellow of our brass. For *sawari*, or white bronze, the copper is alloyed with about twenty-five per cent. of tin. This brittle fusible alloy (in composition nearly the same as our speculum metal) is let into the cavities of the metallic base and fixed, not by the hammer, but by fusion.

But the most beautiful of all these alloys is one of which the Japanese alone have the secret. This is the famous *shakudo*, an alloy of a very pure copper with about three per cent. of gold (from one to five per cent.; with the gold a small quantity of silver may be introduced). To this grey alloy a glossy surface of a deep violet-black colour is given by an elaborate succession of picklings and polishings.

A series of delicate grey shades is produced by a similar treatment of another copper alloy known as *shibu-ichi* (literally 'one part in four'). In this case silver is added to the copper in amounts varying from twenty to fifty per cent. The grey tints of this alloy, or rather series of alloys, are more in favour than the pure white of silver itself.

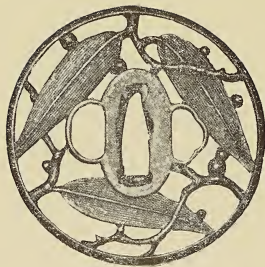
Gold plays an important part both as an inlay and an overlay. For such purposes an alloy of varying proportions of gold and silver is generally employed, the latter metal being removed from the surface by heating the metal and treating it with acids.

Most, if not all, of these metals and alloys may at times either form the ground upon which the decoration is added, or they may themselves be applied to the surface in various ways—as a flat inlay, as a surface incrustation, or as an object in relief, itself elaborately chased or hammered in repoussé. Again, in the form of a wire, the metal (generally either copper or gold) may be hammered into grooves cut in the surface of the ground metal, producing a damascened decoration, or, finally, by a process resembling the *azziminia* work of the Italians, the iron foundation to be decorated may be roughened, and a foil of gold or silver hammered on to the hatchings so produced.

In the case where the decoration of the *tsuba*, or sword-guard, depends solely on the treatment of the ground, the soft wrought-iron, or in other cases the *shakudo* or copper, may be cut away so as only to leave a framework, or the ground may be carved into high or

low relief, or again chiselled out to form an *intaglio*. In the first case—the *ajouré* work—the saw and the file are the instruments mainly employed; chisels of various form, together with the hammer, in the second. On the field itself, between the ornaments, the surface may be pitted or marked in various ways: by hammering, by punching, by chasing, or, more rarely, by etching with acids. In all cases, I think, the work is done on the cold metal. Finally, in a few rare instances, enamels, both *cloisonnés* and *champlevés*, are sparingly applied.

In treating of the history of the artistic development of the sword, we shall be chiefly concerned—at least until the seventeenth century is reached—with the various schools of decoration of the tsuba. There are many Japanese works that treat on the subject of sword furniture. The most important is perhaps the *Sōken Kisho*, published in 1781. The translations made from this work by Captain Brinkley throw much light upon the native canons of criticism in such matters—to this point I shall return later on. Let me first point out that few of the sword-guards in our great English collections are of earlier date than the seventeenth century; the bulk of them belong to the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth; some are of even a later date—in this last case often over-elaborated, showy work, made for exportation. I may mention, by the way, that the series of tsuba shown in the British Museum, though of some historical interest, is of no great artistic value, while the collection at South



SWORD-GUARDS. IRON, PIERCED AND CHISELLED
Sixteenth and seventeenth century

Kensington is disfigured by many poor modern examples.

Apart from a few copper guards found in the dolmen tombs, the earliest tsuba are, with few exceptions, of iron. The work is rude, but not wanting in character—the iron is often much cut away, leaving only a framework of bars. When any incrustation is applied, it takes, at this early date, the form of an inlay of copper wire. Probably as early as the thirteenth century the use of silver for damascening and *azziminia* work came into favour, and soon after that time there are indications of a foreign influence. The native critics allow that in the arts of war the Japanese learned something from the Mongols, whose armada they destroyed about this time, and these people have given their name to a certain style of decoration occasionally found on early tsuba. It is more difficult to suggest an origin for another class of design—this is the southern or *nam-ban* style. The tsuba that are thus classed are characterised by octagonal or square outlines, by frames of studded ornaments, and by a general tendency to a symmetry and balance in the design foreign to the Japanese instinct. Certain of these exotic designs would seem to have long preceded the arrival of the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. They are not to be confused with a later school of symmetrical design, undoubtedly of European origin.

The guards of the late fifteenth and of the sixteenth centuries, with flat surfaces pierced with bold designs (the *kizukashi* style), or with the whole metal carved

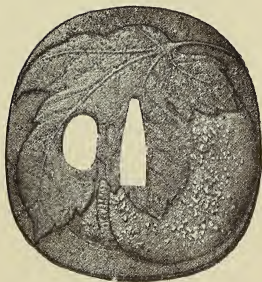
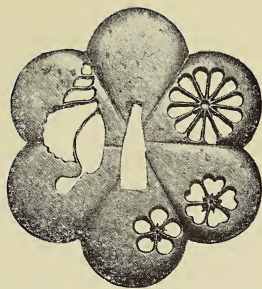
into a simple arrangement of leaves, flowers, masks, or cranes, are unsurpassed for grandeur and effectiveness—Japanese art has rarely produced anything more completely satisfactory.

Seldom before the sixteenth century do we come across the signature of the artist: the first great names are those of the Umetada family—the masterly distinction of some of their iron tsuba, chiselled in low relief, has never been surpassed.

Nobu-iyē, in the sixteenth century, appears to have been almost the only member of the great Miōchin family (see below, pp. 136-7) who distinguished himself as a maker of sword-guards; like his contemporary Kane-iyē, his most characteristic work is in the *sukoshi-bori* manner, where the iron is chiselled or sawn away until only a framework is left.

In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries the *recherché* rudeness of Shōami, and the boldly cut *ajouré* work of the Nakai school of Chōshiu, are only less interesting than the guards that bear the name of the Kinai of Echizen. In some of the tsuba of this last family the artistic treatment of iron reaches its highest perfection. Without the rudeness of the earlier schools, or the tendency to over-elaboration that prevailed later on, the restrained energy and the complete mastery of the material shown by not a few guards bearing the Kinai signature appeal to both the western and the eastern mind.

But it is to the work of the Gotō family that the Japanese assign the highest place as chisellers of metal.



SWORD-GUARDS—IRON, PIERCED AND CHISELLED
Sixteenth century

And here we come across one of those divergences between the standards of western and of Japanese criticism that are indeed so instructive if rightly considered. I call them *chisellers* of metal, for, as I have said, it is the conduct of the chisel under the hand of the artist that first arrests the attention of the Japanese connoisseur. For Yūjō (1439-1512), the founder of the Gotō family, no word of praise is too high. In the case of his *takabori* (carving in high relief) the traces of his chisel, 'so bold and yet so delicate, betray such an elevation of tone, such a distinction of character, that the work cannot be looked upon without emotion.' This is the verdict of the writer of the *Sōken Kisho*, the standard native work on the subject of sword furniture to which I have already referred. The thirteen successors of Yūjō bring us down to the end of the eighteenth century—this line of distinguished craftsmen runs indeed parallel with the painters of the Kano school, with whom many members of the Gotō family were closely allied, often working from designs of Kano masters.

Our Japanese historian of art, quoting a native philosopher, tells us that in art there are four grades—the inferior, the skilled, the expert, and the master—and he goes on quaintly to affirm that this classification applies equally to the conduct of a gentleman. (I take this passage from that often-quoted work, the *Sōken Kisho*.) After all this, it is disappointing to have to confess that, on the whole, there is little in the work of the Gotō family to interest the European connoisseur.

We cannot find much to rouse our enthusiasm in designs of curly-haired, impossible dogs (though they be called lions) sporting among pæony flowers, or, again, in the little figures of warriors in grotesque armour, however minutely they may be finished. We look, if not for interest of subject, at least for broader and bolder designs, and these indeed we find rather in the work of other schools of metal-chasers. It is true that of the work of the earlier Gotōs scarcely an example has reached Europe. As for the later members of the family, it would seem that it was to the chasing of *shakudo* for the *fuchi-kashira*, rather than to the decoration of the tsuba, that they applied their most delicate work. They were famed, too, for the beauty of their flat surfaces, above all for the 'fish-roe' granulations with which they covered the grounds of their *shakudo* guards.

The Gotō school reached perhaps its highest level in the days of Genroku, the luxurious *Joken-in* period (1681-1708) to which so many references have already been made. The school then branched out into three divisions, known as the Yokoya, the Nara, and the Hamano sub-schools. The later members of these families abandoned the restraints of the earlier traditions. They rejoiced in rich inlays of gold, and their various patinas provided them with a full 'palette of colours.' Of the Genroku metal-workers I will only mention Yokoya Sōmin, who is accused by the Japanese of introducing the pictorial style under the influence of his friend Hanabusa Itcho (see p. 77).

The older men, we are told, only used three forms of chisel—they were thus able to give a directness and simplicity to their work. This *coup de ciseau* was lost when the naturalistic school called in the assistance of an elaborate series of tools. Hence the petty spirit and ‘preciosity’ of the later times. I should say that I am here summarising the estimate of a contemporary Japanese critic. As to the whole Gotō school I confess that I await conversion.

It would be impossible here even to give a list of the various materials that have been applied at times to the later sword-guards. Not only metals, but ivory, mother-of-pearl, coral, and agate are called into use. The guard, again, may be of metal coated with lacquer, or itself of lacquered wood.

The wood-grain (*mokume*) and ‘marbled’ (*midzu-nagashi*) surfaces are produced by the punching, folding, and hammering out in various ways of layers of coloured alloys that have been previously soldered together in thin sheets. Again a beautiful effect is obtained by simply scooping out channels on the surface of such artfully soldered layers. On the sides of these grooves the alternating strata of metal are disclosed.

I will finally call attention to two somewhat exceptional methods of decoration, both of which probably date back to the beginning of the seventeenth century. In the one case, on the iron surface is scattered, as it were a shower of silver drops—the effect is produced, apparently, by melting little pellets of silver that have

been previously fixed to the ground. Of wider interest is the application of enamels to a small part or the whole of the surface. Such work has at all times been associated with the Hirata family. Very characteristic are the translucent enamels contained in little cells lined by plaited gold wire; these are sparingly applied in small medallions scattered over the *shakudo* ground. This method may perhaps be traced back to Korean prototypes. At a later time (eighteenth century) *cloisonné* enamels of a more normal type are occasionally applied to the whole surface. It must be borne in mind that the application of enamel on a large scale to the surface of vessels of copper was unknown in Japan before the nineteenth century, as will be explained at the end of the next chapter.¹

The members of the Miōchin family—the oldest and perhaps the most highly honoured of any artistic family in Japan—were in the first place hammerers of iron. But it is neither as forgers of sword-blades nor as decorators of sword furniture (though the signature of at least one Miōchin may be found on tsuba) that this family acquired its high position. In early days they were, above all, armourers—forgers and chisellers of helmets and breastplates. In more recent times they turned their hand to the production of various orna-

¹ Professor Church, whose superb collection of tsuba has more than once been shown to the public, is our first authority on the technical side of the subject of sword-guards. See especially his introductory essay to the Catalogue of the Exhibition at the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1894.

mental objects (*okimono*)—birds, dragons, or even lobsters and insects. These are for the most part built up of plates—often ingeniously articulated—so as to resemble the plumage or the scales of the animal represented.

Munesake, who in the twelfth century first took the name of Miōchin, was a member of a family of armourers who traced their line back to prehistoric times. It was he who forged for Yoshitsune the famous suit of armour to which we have already referred. The nine succeeding generations of the Miōchin family were, above all, forgers of helmets—they form a group apart, the Miōchin Judai. Not until the twenty-first generation (this was in the early seventeenth century) do we come upon signed pieces. Even in these later days we can find no signature upon some of their most famous works. To give a prominent example, the famous eagle at South Kensington, for which £1000 was paid to Mr. Mitford (Lord Redesdale), is unsigned. This is a magnificent work of the seventeenth century, undoubtedly by a member of the Miōchin family.

One final word on Japanese armour and swords. It must be borne in mind that of the numberless examples of exquisite work now in English collections—how vast the material is was well exemplified in the collection lately brought together by the Japan Society—but very few, perhaps not one in a hundred, can be referred to a date preceding the foundation of the Tokugawa régime. In other words, the objects are as a whole the

produce of a period of uninterrupted peace. The armour can rarely have been worn except on occasions of ceremony, and the swords can have been seldom drawn unless it were for the purpose of a vendetta or for self-immolation.

CHAPTER IX

METAL WORK—PART II. THE CASTING OF IRON AND BRONZE—ENAMELS

Iron Castings—The Process of Bronze Casting—Large Temple Castings—Vases and Okimono of Bronze—Seimin and his followers—*Cloisonné* Enamels.

I N the last chapter I have been chiefly concerned with the artistic treatment of wrought-iron, with other metals only so far as they formed part of the decoration of the sword. The production of works of art by casting in moulds, above all the casting of objects in bronze and iron by the *cire perdue* process, has now to be described.

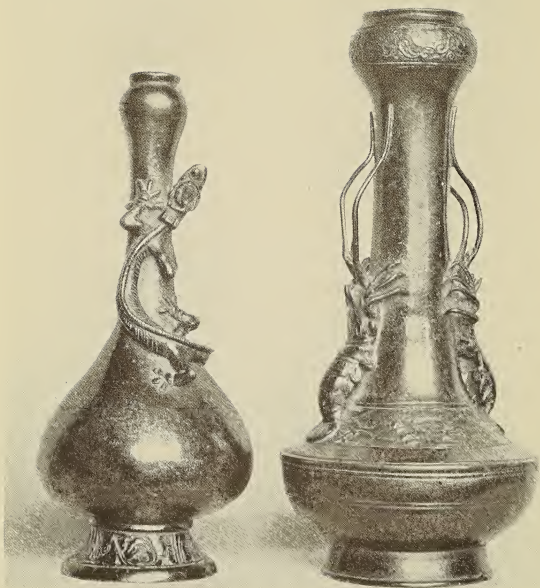
A word must be said first of the casting of iron, an art in which the Japanese acquired considerable skill at a very early period. In later days, whatever of artistic work is to be found in castings of iron is confined for the most part to the massive kettles in which the water for tea, especially in the *Cha-no-yu* ceremony, was heated. An extraordinary amount of care was devoted to the casting of these flanged caldrons, and the designs were provided by the greatest artists of the Zen and Kano schools. In fact, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the casters of these vessels—the

Kamashi—held a social position that was never attained by the most famous casters of bronze.

By how early a date the Japanese had mastered the art of casting bronze, we see by the flanged bells—if bells they are (they have been more than once wrongly described as of iron)—of which I have already said something (see above, p. 24). To turn out a casting over five feet in height of such thinness is no easy matter—the preparation of the moulds alone would require the most delicate workmanship and long experience. Yet already in the eighth century these bells are spoken of as antiquities.

From the earliest days the bronze used by the Japanese founders has differed little in general composition, though this composition is irregular enough. It is distinguished, above all, by the large quantity of lead that it contains—sometimes as much as fifteen or eighteen per cent.—in fact the alloy contains generally considerably more lead than tin. The presence of lead promotes the fluidity of the molten metal and ensures its entry into the remotest interstices of the mould. Besides this a bronze containing much lead acquires, even without separate treatment with reagents, a fine velvety patina—a patina, by the way, the formation of which is promoted by the damp and smoky atmosphere of London.

Of the traditions, of the social status, of the method of work of the Japanese bronze-founder we are in the possession of detailed and accurate information—information of a character so sadly lacking in the case of



FLOWER-VASES
Bronze. Eighteenth century

so many of the other arts of the country. That this is so is entirely due to the admirable *résumé* of the whole subject contained in a paper read by Professor Gowland before the Society of Arts (April 1895). Of this paper, or rather of parts of it, I cannot do better than give a brief summary.¹

The bronze-caster, as I have said, appears to have never attained to the social position of the sword-smith or even of the caster of a certain class of iron kettles. He was and is essentially an artisan, working in a small foundry attached to his town dwelling—here at hand are rooms for the preparation of his designs, for modelling and for the making of moulds; these rooms may very likely open upon a pleasant garden. His apprentices are trained in the workshop, passing from rougher and more menial tasks to work of an essentially artistic nature. They live in the master's house, they are fed and trained by him, and they become in fact minor members of the family. In time, on proof of special skill and of high character, one of them might be adopted by the master and succeed him when he retired. Before this time he would have been initiated into, and have thoroughly mastered, all the secrets of the trade. All through the workshops, from the youngest to the oldest, reigns a thorough spirit of loyalty to the master and to the traditions of the craft.

The process of casting in a mould, built up upon a model of wax over a core—the *cire-perdue* process of the renaissance artists—has only been practised for

¹ I have supplemented this by some notes from native sources.

some twenty years in England ; but in Japan it would appear that the art has been known and in use for ages. Both the wax from the wax-tree (*Rhus succedaneum*) and bees-wax—the latter by preference for finer castings—are used, in both cases worked up with resin. On the core itself, which is built up of clay and chopped straw, carefully prepared and dried, the vase or other object is modelled in wax—this work of modelling is of course, from the artistic point of view, the essential chapter in the whole elaborate process. The artist may work from a rough drawing or from a model, but this he does not mechanically copy. A thin layer of fireclay is at first applied to the surface of the wax with a brush, when this is dry other coatings succeed ; a thicker coat of coarser clay is finally added by the hand. In the selection and preparation of the clay the greatest care is exercised—upon this, indeed, the success of the casting in great measure depends. When all is dry the wax is melted out, the mould is then raised to a dull red heat in the furnace, and the molten bronze straightway run in.

The mechanical details of the actual casting need not detain us here. I may mention that for flat objects, as for instance coins or mirrors, moulds of sand or clay are prepared from a matrix, as with us.

Most ingenious is the process by which any deficiencies in the casting are made good. A clay mould is built up round the part to be repaired and fresh metal is run in, care being taken to allow a stream of the molten metal to run through for a short period, so as to



BRONZE INCENSE-BURNER AND SMALL FLOWER-VASE
Eighteenth century

melt the surface of the original casting and thus secure its intimate union with the added pieces. By a similar process handles and various subsidiary parts are fixed to the main body of the casting. Again, in the case of large compound castings, the separate parts are by a process of the same nature so intimately united that it is often impossible to distinguish the line of junction of the sections.

When treating of the chiselling and hammering of iron, we were chiefly concerned with the arms and armour of the samurai. We shall now find that, at least until comparatively recent times, it was for the temples and monasteries that the bronze founder had for the most part to work—the Buddhist priests were his principal patrons. The demand was for statues of saints, large and small, for temple bells and lanterns of all sizes, and finally for the vases, censers, and candlesticks that stood in front of the altar. The making of flower-vases or other vessels for domestic use, and still more the casting of *okimono*—purely ornamental objects—is a development of comparatively recent days.

It is a point of great interest to find that some of the very earliest bronze statues, those attributed to the sixth and seventh centuries, were made by riveting together two thin segments of metal that had been previously either cast or hammered out, to form the front and the back of the image. This is a process well known to students of a certain period of archaic Greek art.

But before the end of the seventh century a great advance had been made in the casting of bronze, an

advance that corresponded to the higher artistic level that the glyptic art had by this time attained. The deep religious feeling that we recognise in some of the figures of Kwannon or Amida, preserved in the temples of the Nara district, is no less remarkable than the unmistakable survival in some of them of the traditions of later Greek art. These statues were undoubtedly made by the *cire perdue* process, but in the finishing of the work the chisel played an important part. No less remarkable are the marvellous screens of pierced metal—of gilt bronze for the most part—and the circular and almond-shaped nimbi, often a great size, that form a backing to the head or to the whole figure of the Buddha or saint. A work of a similar class is the banner, in the form of a pierced grill of gilt copper, fifteen feet in height, preserved in the old temple of Horiuji; the elaborate designs of floating angels and floral friezes are of the greatest interest.

During the Nara period (eighth century) there was a rage for casting statues of bronze. Then it was that the mining and smelting of the native deposits of copper ore were first carried out on an extensive scale. We are told, too, that the newly introduced coinage went to fill the crucibles of the bronze founder. The culminating work of this period is the great statue cast in the year 749 for the Todaiji monastery. The huge 'Nara Daibutsu'¹ is seated on a lotus flower, each of

¹ Whether to be identified with Vairokana or Rokana, this is essentially the Buddha of *Light*, and, according to the ideas of the time, the 'original Buddha' of the Shinto sun goddess.

whose fifty-six petals measures ten and a half feet by six. The height of the figure is fifty-three feet, the breadth of the face over nine feet. It is built up of plates about seven inches in thickness, separately cast. These are either fused together on the edges by the process we have alluded to, or (in the upper part) brazed to one another by running a more fusible alloy between the joints. Earthquakes and fires have played havoc with this statue; indeed the present head dates only from the sixteenth century.

Better preserved is the beautiful seated figure of Amida at Kamakura, of which I have already spoken (p. 46). This is what the Japanese call a 'wet Buddha'—it has long stood unsheltered from rain and snow. Professor Gowland mentions that in this case the separate segments of which the statue is built up have been thoroughly fused together with an alloy of the same composition as the rest of the figure.

The great bronze bells of the Buddhist temples are suspended from an open wooden framework—the Shōrō or belfry that stands in the outer enclosure of the temple. The bell is struck on the outside by a swinging beam of wood. The note given out is remarkable for the rich-toned pulsations—the beats—which may often be heard at a great distance. Standing on a hillside perhaps fifteen miles distant from both Nara and Kyoto, I have myself distinctly heard the solemn boom of the great bells of each of these cities.

The huge bell of Todaiji at Nara, which was cast as early as 732, still hangs in the courtyard of the temple:

it is over thirteen feet in height and probably weighs about forty tons. The great bells of Kioto—one of them is fourteen feet in height and weighs at least fifty-six tons—are of much later date (seventeenth century), but the early model, doubtless derived from China, has in the interval undergone no change. These bells have all been cast on the spot where they now stand. The very metal, in the form of coins and ornaments of all sorts, was in part derived from the offerings of the faithful, who even contributed to the *main d'œuvre*—at the time of the casting innumerable pilgrims were ready at hand eager to 'acquire merit' by working the great bellows of the furnace or by other menial tasks.

In later days the pious offerings to the temples took by preference the form of a standing bronze lantern. These tall *tōrō*, which date for the most part from Tokugawa times—though some may be as old as the fifteenth century—are ornamented with elaborate designs in relief, and they generally bear a dedicatory inscription. One Jiyemon Yasuteru in the time of the Taiko Hideyoshi acquired great fame in the designing and casting of these temple lanterns.

The great bronzes for the tombs of the early Tokugawa Shoguns were cast by later members of the Jiyemon family. Of these the tomb of Iyeyasu at Nikko is the earliest and the most famous. The great gate of the enclosure that immediately surrounds the tomb is constructed entirely of bronze—roof, pillars, and doors. The mausoleum itself, shaped like a low pagoda—a cylindrical body with square roof—is of a

pale bronze. It was cast, in one piece it is said, by Jiyemon Yasu-iye, the grandson of the Jiyemon of Taiko's time.

In front of the mausoleum of Iyeyasu, on a low bronze table bearing the Tokugawa badge, stands, in the centre, a huge incense-burner, on one side a crane mounted on a tortoise and holding aloft in his mouth a pricket candlestick, on the other a vase of archaic form in which is placed a lotus plant—all these objects of bronze. These are, in fact, gigantic examples of the *san-gusoku*—the equipment of three pieces that stand in front of a Buddhist altar. In other cases—more often perhaps—there may be two candlesticks and two vases on either side of the central censer—a garniture of five objects in all (the *go-gusoku*). Of the vessels of bronze that have reached Europe—of the older ones, at least—a large number have originally held this place in front of a Buddhist shrine. Sometimes they are of brass or of the *sentoku* alloy mentioned above. In size they may vary from such colossal objects as those in front of Iyeyasu's tomb to the little vessels, an inch or two in height, that stand in front of the *Butsu-do*—the domestic altar. The lamps, again, that hang in front of such a shrine have given occasion for many beautiful designs in bronze.

There is little opportunity for finding a place in a Japanese house for large castings of bronze. Outside, in the garden, by the approach to the *chōzu-ba* (the lavatory), the inevitable water-basin may at times take the form of a graceful vessel in cast or hammered

bronze, and a lantern with green patina, either of the standing form or suspended from the eaves, may light the way at night. In the guest-room on the raised recess—the *toko-no-ma*—the flower-vase (*hana-ike*), or at times an incense-burner (*kōrō*), may be in the shape of a bronze of ancient Chinese design. Such a bronze flower-vase, of classical form, was in favour with the 'tea-men,' but rarely would more than one be seen in a room. Endless are the shapes given to these vases. It may be noted that in those of Japanese origin, the flat disk that forms the base is always a separate casting, which sometimes indeed falls out. The older bronzes take on a dark glossy patina which, as I have said, is fortunately readily developed by the atmosphere of London.

On this same *toko-no-ma* may at times be found an object of bronze—a casting of a purely ornamental nature. The *okimono*, as such a piece is called, is a late development of the bronze founder's art—it can hardly have come into general use before the end of the seventeenth century. It was a female expert, one Kame of Nagasaki, who at that time first made a name as a designer of small castings of this class. The earliest application to such work of the old process of *cire perdue* has even been claimed for her. Castings by this Kame are, however, quite unknown in Europe. But in Japan her quail incense-burners are as famous as are the tortoises of Seimin with us.

It was not till near the end of the succeeding century that another Nagasaki artist acquired a great name as



BRONZE OKIMONO, FIGHT OF TIGER AND DRAGON
Signed Sei-min

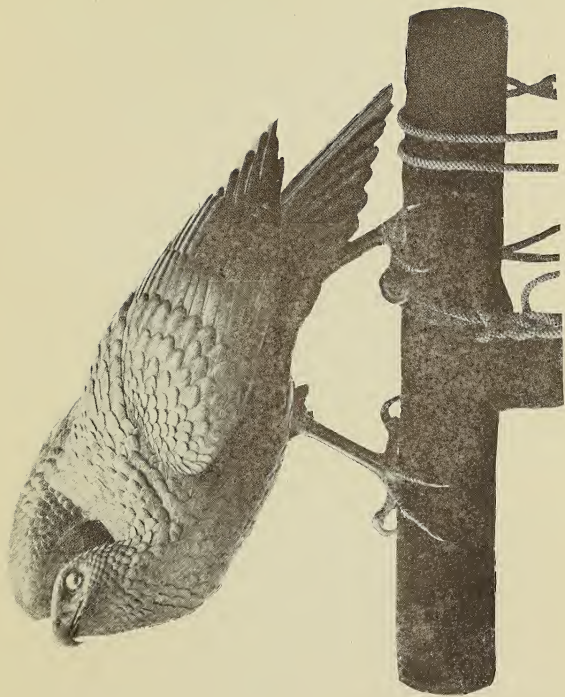
a caster of okimono. This was Seimin who moved to Yedo early in the nineteenth century; he made flower-vases and incense-burners like his predecessors; but his fame is chiefly due to his rendering of animal forms, above all of the tortoise. In this case the influence of the Shijo school may be seen—the tortoises of Seimin are to be classed with the monkeys of Sosen and the fish of Ōkio. Seimin was a master of the *cire-perdue* process, and he preferred to work with the pale brassy alloy known as *sentoku*. Seimin and his pupils generally signed their work. The signature, which was impressed upon the wax, is as a rule enclosed in an oblong frame that projects slightly from the surrounding surface; more rarely it is cast separately in the form of a little slip of metal which is inserted into a hole cut in the finished work.

Of the pupils of Seimin, the best known in Europe is To-un. The fame of To-un rests principally upon his dragons, either standing alone as okimono, or encircling some other object—censer or flower-vase—with their scaly coils. The signature of Sōmin, another pupil of Seimin, is often found on bronzes in European collections—he worked as late as 1871. Gido's work is rarer; his speciality, the *Shishi* or lion ('dog of Fō'), is a beast that does not much interest the European collector.

There is no falling-off in skill in the bronze castings of the present generation. But a false direction has been given to the art by the demand of the western market. The flower-vases with decoration in high

relief that bear the signatures of the brothers Jo-un are sometimes seen in English collections, more often the mechanical work of their imitators. There is at South Kensington a huge censer on which a pair of doves has alighted, below stands a peacock—an unsatisfactory piece of work, in spite of the skill shown in the plumage of the birds. Captain Brinkley tells us that Suzuki Chokichi, who cast this bronze some years ago, has since then attained high rank as an expert to the court of the Mikado—his work is now guided by the 'old canons of Japanese art where the naturalistic modelling is always duly subordinated to the decorative design.'

I must finally say a word of the Japanese mirror. The older type, examples of which have been found in the dolmen tombs, takes the form of a solid circular disk of bronze. This is a form that has been in use in China from the most remote ages. The design stands out in high relief from a sunk recess in the centre. The vines and squirrels, the signs of the zodiac, and the arrangement of the ornament in symmetrical zones give an exotic appearance to these designs—there is, perhaps, a recollection of the early art of western Asia. Very similar mirrors were indeed in use in Persia in early Mohammedan days. These, like the mirrors found in the Japanese dolmen tombs, may well have been copies of Chinese originals. This small solid form of mirror was still in use for toilet purposes in quite recent times. But much commoner are the large thinner mirrors of a pale alloy, with a plain rect-



BRONZE FALCON

By *Suzuki Chokichi*, *Nineteenth century*

angular handle. In these the designs in low relief on the back are of a purely Japanese type. As a consequence of a small amount of buckling developed during the polishing of the mirror face, these designs may sometimes reappear in the reflection from the polished surface. But this property of the 'magic mirror' is quite exceptional and, it would appear, undesigned.

ENAMELS.—There will be no need to dwell at any length upon the art of the enameller as practised in Japan. In spite of the wide field that the Japanese have given of late years to the application of *cloisonné* enamel, the process is by no means a characteristically Japanese one. The art of enamelling was indeed unknown in early days—the mirror with enamelled back in the Shoso-in collection at Nara (eighth century, see p. 30) is certainly of foreign origin. It is noticeable that the *cloisons* in this case are of gold, as in the contemporary enamels of Constantinople.

It was probably from the Tartars that the Chinese learnt the art of decorating the surface of bronze vessels by fusing, in little cells prepared on the surface, pastes formed of a flux of lead silicate coloured by various metallic oxides—this was as late as the fifteenth century. When the art reached Japan, the enamels were either applied in cells (*cloisons*) built up by little ribbons of metal soldered on to a metallic base, or more rarely they were fused in the hollows scooped out of the surface (*champlevé*). But in either

case the decoration was for long confined to small objects—to kodzuka, sword-guards, *ojime* beads, or again to the recessed handles of the sliding doors (*hiki-te*). In the 'Palace of Pleasure' at Fushimi, especial praise was given to the enamelled *Kugi-kakushi*—the plaques that covered the nail-heads in the framework of the rooms. Perhaps the most exquisite work is to be found on the little stands of silver filigree in which the miniature tongs and other implements used in the incense game are placed. Of the enamels with which Hirata Donin and his successors decorated the furniture of the sword, I have already spoken (see p. 136); the family was above all celebrated for the purity of the white pastes, of which they long preserved the secret. The large enamelled vases of the later Ming period were no doubt known to the Japanese, but this magnificent ware seems to have found little favour with them.

The word *shippō* (*shichi-hō*), by which enamels of all kinds are known to the Japanese, means 'the seven treasures or precious things.' The term is doubtless of Chinese origin, and takes us back to a time when amber, tortoise-shell, coral, agate, mother-of-pearl, rock-crystal, and lapis-lazuli were used as inlays. It was not until the year 1830 that the first experiments in the application of enamels to copper or bronze vessels of any size were made in Japan. It was a poor samurai of Nagoya, one Kaji Tsunekichi, who at that time attempted to imitate the enamelled vases of the Chinese. Not till nine years later did his experiments meet with

any success, and indeed it was only shortly before the opening of the country to foreign trade that the new ware became known in the country generally. The industry—for such the art soon became—at once fell under foreign influence, and before long these Nagoya enamels with their prevailing dull green tint were to be found in all the curio shops of Europe and America. In this mechanically executed ware, the enamels, poor in colour and design, are applied to a base of thin hammered copper. The surface is often given an appearance of smoothness and finish by a plentiful application of wax.

The Nagoya enamels fell rapidly into disrepute and were sold for absurdly low prices. The later developments of enamel in Japan, I cannot do more than mention here. Enamelling in various forms has played an important part in the latter-day art of Japan, and in many new processes the Japanese have shown the highest technical skill; indeed, in the application of enamel to pottery and porcelain they have decidedly broken new ground. Of later years, at Tokio and at Kioto, the two families of Namikawa—they are in no way connected—have, each in its own way, taken a foremost place in this art. The cloisonless (or more properly crypto-cloisonné) enamels of the Tokio Namikawa are now well known. Pictorial effects of the greatest delicacy are obtained by this process, but there may be some doubt as to their decorative value. Other artists have devoted themselves to the imitation of the old 'self-coloured' porcelains of China by means

of a monochrome enamel on a metal base. The enamels of the Kioto Namikawa, on the other hand, are distinguished by a fine meshwork of cloisons. But perhaps the most beautiful of all these modern applications of enamels may be found in the transparent pastes that have found a place as a subordinate decoration to the elaborate chiselled work in iron, gold, *shakudo*, and above all silver—work that in some instances is worthy to be compared with that of the renaissance goldsmiths of Augsburg or Milan.

CHAPTER X

THE NETSUKE

The Sagemono—Origin of the Netsuke—Materials—The Manju Netsuke—Carvers of Netsukes—Masks.

WE have seen that the two swords that the Japanese samurai carried at his side may often have constituted the most important items among his worldly goods. Now, tucked into this same *obi* or sash that held the swords, various other articles were carried; and this not by the military class only, the commonest coolie was never without his pipe and tobacco-pouch, in summer time hanging from his only garment—a scanty loin-cloth. For in the Japanese costume pockets are unknown—at best some light articles, as paper, may be carried in the loose sleeve of the *kimono*, or a pocket-book may be slipped into the breast.

In later times—I mean within the last two or three hundred years—the principal things carried in this way were the pipe, with or without a case, and the tobacco-pouch. But many other objects might be seen at times: the little *inro* for carrying seals or medicine—of this we shall have more to say in our chapter on lacquer—a box with flint and steel, or again a fan in summer.

Some of these things, as the fan or the pipe, might, like the swords of the samurai, be simply stuck into the sash. But in the case of the intro or the pouch, for greater security, the cord from which the object was suspended, after being passed under the obi, was kept from slipping by means of a button or toggle of wood, ivory, or other material. This is the use to which the *netsuke* (literally 'root-fixer') is put by the Japanese—to our seeming a very humble one when we consider what a wealth of skill and fancy have been devoted to these little objects.

There is much obscurity as to the origin of many of these *sagemono* (hanging-things), as the Japanese call them. They play so important a part in the equipment of a native of the country that we can hardly think of him without some of them at least. But few of these *sagemono* can be traced back beyond the sixteenth or, at furthest, the fifteenth century. The whole arrangement was dependent upon the use of the obi or sash as part of the male costume, but when the obi first came into use I am unable to say. In early days it was to the *kinchaku* or money-pouch that the greatest attention was given. This pouch was made of the most precious exotic materials—rare furs, and strange varieties of leather were at one time in fashion. It may be compared to the somewhat similar money-bag in use with us in the fifteenth century. Captain Brinkley maintains that this pouch is now represented by the amulet-bag carried by Japanese children, rather than by the tobacco-pouch which ostensibly takes its



2

I
NETSUKE

1. *Painted wood; Hotei; signed Shuzan; seventeenth century*
2. *Obamu; Ivory; circa 1800. Signed Minoboku*
3. *Buddhist Saint; Ivory; end eighteenth century*

3

place. At any rate the *kinchaku* has long passed out of use, and the *inro* has of late years been little seen among the *sagemono*. It is the tobacco-pouch and the pipe-case that have taken the position of prominence, and with them the netsuke or toggle that keeps them in position. But it must be borne in mind that the pipe-case or the pipe alone may at times itself play the part of the netsuke.

There is another small object that holds an important position in connection with the netsuke. This is the little bead, the *ojime*, that slips along the double cord between the netsuke and the object suspended and helps to secure the latter. To these *ojime* the most exquisite and minutely finished work is devoted. They may be of inlaid metal, of enamel, or of various precious stones, or again they may take the form of a delicately carved peach-stone.

There has been much discussion as to the origin of the netsuke, and this with little result. The most that can be affirmed is that in earlier days—in the sixteenth century, let us say—the netsuke was incompletely differentiated from other objects; in some cases at least it seems to have served at the same time the purpose of a seal. It is a fact that many netsukes representing men and animals are so designed that they may be balanced on their feet. Now this skill expended on this careful balancing is quite thrown away in the present use to which these objects are applied. There is some evidence to show that this class of netsuke, at any rate, has been developed from

a form in which a seal served as the basis on which the figure stood.

Again, it is significant that the earliest maker of netsukes whose name has come down to us was known familiarly as Hina-ya, that is to say 'maker of *hina*.' These *hina* are now conventional-shaped dolls given to little girls on their festival day (the fifth day of the fifth month)—I may mention that I have seen more than one netsuke in this form. But at one time there was a fashion for a much more elaborate treatment of the *hina*—they were made in many forms and were arranged in groups to represent every function and ceremony of Japanese life. Closely allied to such work are the little figures made by the Nara wood-carvers. These, too, were often arranged in elaborate groups, and at one time were greatly esteemed—they even enjoyed Imperial patronage. But the *Nara Nigiyo* of to-day have little claim to be ranked as works of art.

More perhaps than even in the case of other examples of Japanese art, it is to the *subject* of the netsuke that the European collector looks in the first place—and no wonder! for we have in a collection of netsukes an epitome of Japanese folklore and of the domestic life of the people—add to this a representation of the animal and vegetable world of Japan; it was from this point of view that was gathered together the collection that the late Sir A. W. Franks bequeathed to the British Museum. But on purely artistic grounds the netsuke is worthy of all attention. As an expression



2

I
IVORY NETSUKES
Nineteenth century

3

of the art of the sculptor in small, it is something *sui generis*, governed by principles of its own. Compactness of form, beauty of surface, and, as in nearly all Japanese art, vitality and, when called for, an expression of vigorous movement, these are some of the points to be looked for in a good netsuke—a humorous suggestion, direct or veiled, is nearly always present.

On the whole the best netsukes are carved from wood, from cherry and box-wood above all. As M. Gonse puts it—the work is here ‘plus gras, plus souple, plus caressé.’ There has of late been a tendency to depreciate the ivory netsuke, but many of the best artists of the early nineteenth century used that material by preference; and if with it we include the coarse walrus and the so-called fossil ivory, perhaps nine-tenths or more of a collection of netsukes will be found to be of one or other of these materials. But many other substances were called into use at times—vegetable ivory, bone, horn (both of deer and ox), porcelain, and stones of many kinds. That a piece of any one of these materials, though otherwise uncarved, is intended for a netsuke, may be recognised by the two apertures of the passage through which the cord is intended to be passed. The writer has in his possession an egg-shaped piece of rock-crystal traversed by needles of a dark mineral, and an irregular fragment of amber enclosing a spider and several species of insects, both of them bored with this curved passage indicating the purpose they have served.

Something must now be said of a netsuke of quite

another form. The *manju* (so called from its resemblance to a kind of cake eaten at the New Year) is a lens-shaped button generally of ivory, its surface inlaid or carved in relief. In one variety a metal disk fits loosely into the recessed flat surface of the button. The face of this disk—the *kagami buta*—may be decorated in all the various fashions that are found on the furniture of the sword.

The native handbooks of the minor arts have little to say on the subject of the netsuke. There is, however, some valuable information to be found in an appendix to the *Sōken Kisho*, the treatise on sword ornaments, from which we already quoted more than once. Here we are told that the first carver of netsukes to acquire any fame was Shuzan, a painter of the Tosa school. Like so many of the later netsuke carvers, Shuzan was an Ozaka man. His name is found on many a netsuke of archaic character—often seal-like in form, and always richly and elaborately decorated in colour. Shuzan's work has been copied from his day to the present, so that a Shuzan netsuke means little more than a netsuke of a certain definite character—a representative, indeed, of what was perhaps the earliest form of painted netsuke. As to Shuzan himself, this netsuke carving, we are told, was only an interlude in his artistic life; he gave up all work of the kind some time before his death in 1691.

Somewhat later the members of the Miwa family acquired a name for their largely conceived and boldly executed little figures of men and animals; but genuine



MANJU OR BUTTON-SHAPED NETSUKES

examples of their work may be searched for in vain in English collections. It is not until we reach the end of the eighteenth century that we come across signatures which, when found upon netsukes showing some distinction and style, may be regarded as probably genuine. Mintoku, Tadatoshi, Masanao, Kômin, and many others carried the art to its highest pitch. In their treatment of the figure, and in their scenes from the life of the day, these men were influenced by the ukiyo or popular school—in their careful rendering of animal or vegetable life by the naturalism of the Shijo artists. As in the case of the latter painters, we have many names of netsuke carvers that are associated each with the rendering of a special animal—Ikkwan with his rats, Tomotade with oxen, Giokunin with tortoises, and Masanao with frogs.

Of the larger carvings in ivory, so many of which have reached England of late years, I shall not speak. In spite of the extraordinary skill shown in many of these works, there is something about them that is repugnant to the spirit of the best Japanese traditions.

Of much greater interest are certain large carvings of wood which, like the ivory figures, may also be classed as *okimono*. These are generally painted, though the painting is often much worn off. The Seven Lucky Gods (*Shichi-fuku-jin*) are favourite motives, or again, *Sennin* in ragged cloaks. Sometimes a strangely shaped fragment of gnarled root has, by means of slight additions, been made to assume the

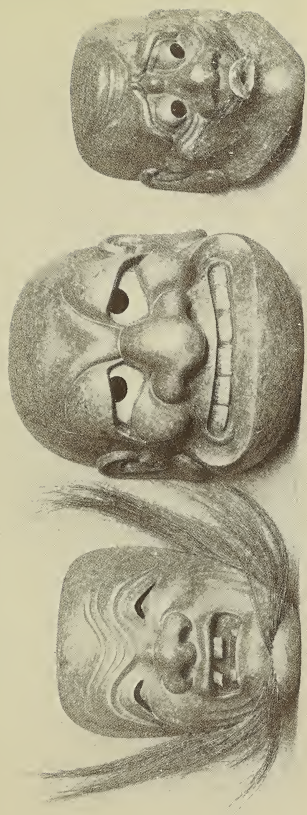
aspect of an ascetic saint; but such work is more often of Chinese origin.

Not unconnected, probably, with the carvers of the early painted netsukes were the artists who carved and painted the wooden masks. These masks (Jap. *men*) have been in use from early days in the ceremonial and mimetic dances or plays that long preceded the development of the Japanese stage.¹ It was in the sixteenth century, in the days of Nobunaga and of Hideyoshi especially, that these plays, in which mimetic dancing was combined with short dialogues, were most in favour and were celebrated with the greatest magnificence, and it was then that the most famous carvers of masks flourished.

But the fashioning of masks may be traced back to a much earlier time—perhaps even to prehistoric days. The carving of them is a specially Japanese art, uninfluenced by Chinese models, and, unlike so many of the other arts of the country, it is connected rather with the Shinto than with the Buddhist religion. There is a famous collection of masks, some nearly a thousand years old, preserved at Itsukushima, in the old shrine built on piles in a shallow bay of the Inland Sea (see above, p. 100).

Various types of character are expressed in these painted wooden masks, and many of these types have been handed down with little change from remote

¹ It may be noted that some of the most skilful makers of netsukes have made a speciality of the carving of miniature masks, single or in groups.



MASKS OF CARVED WOOD; USED IN CEREMONIAL DANCES
Sixteenth or seventeenth century

periods to the present day. For the popular theatre that had its origin in Yedo in the seventeenth century by no means led to the disuse of the old *Sarugaku* and *Nō* dramas. These old-world primitive pieces, in which dancing played the principal part, were kept up in the families of gentle birth, who looked askance upon the frequentation of the new *bourgeois* stage. Each family had its collection of masks, for use in these dances, carefully preserved in bags of rich brocade—the wrappers themselves often of as great an antiquity and of scarcely less value than their contents.

The painting of these wooden masks is executed upon some white grounding; the surface is not lacquered as might be expected, and it is readily damaged by water. The hair—horse-hair, it would seem—is passed in little tufts through holes bored in the wood.

There is only one name that I need mention in connection with the carving of masks. This is Deme Yoshimitsu, who received from the Taiko the highest honour that can be conferred upon an artist. He was named *Tenka Ichi*, literally 'the *one* under the heavens.' The Deme family continued until recent times to be famed as mask carvers.

CHAPTER XI

LACQUER

The Process of Lacquering—Varieties of Lacquer—The Inro—Early Lacquer—Kōrin—Ritsuo—The Koma and Kajikawa Families—Zeshin.

AT the dawn of their history—let us say about the year 600 A.D.—we find that the Japanese were already acquainted with the use of lacquer. At an even earlier date than this, if we may trust the traditions preserved in the oldest records, the art would appear to have been practised by official lacquerers, connected with the court. But for all this it is probable that, as in the case of nearly all the other arts of Japan, the knowledge of the use of lacquer came over from Korea or China along with the Buddhist religion. In after days, it is true, the Chinese acknowledged the superiority of their eastern neighbours, and even deigned to be taught by them some of the *arcana* of the lacquerer's craft.

The lacquer tree (*Rhus vernicifera*), though found not only in central and southern Japan but even far away to the north, is not probably a native of the country. It grows now, however, freely on the hill-sides, generally in mountainous districts. The sap that exudes from the incisions cut in the trunk of the tree, as well as that which is extracted from the

branches (the two differ greatly in quality), is a 'greyish, creamy liquid of a viscous consistency.' When freed from extraneous matter this *urushi* consists of little else than a vegetable acid—known as urushic acid—and must not in any way be confused with the varnishes used by us in Europe. This highly poisonous viscous liquid has many remarkable properties. It turns black and changes in nature when exposed to the sun. It will only 'dry' under certain conditions—most rapidly in a damp atmosphere at a temperature of 70° to 80° F. This so-called drying is in reality in the nature of a chemical change.

The essential point to bear in mind in following the many complicated operations that are involved in the lacquering of any object—especially if it is intended to produce a work of art—is the fact that each successive coat—and there are many of them—must be completely dry before the next is applied. The rapidity of the drying may be hastened by the addition of various ingredients to the *urushi*,¹ but by this the quality of the work is impaired. It is in great measure due to the unlimited time that the craftsmen were willing to bestow on their work that the perfection of the old lacquer is due.

It must be remembered, too, that lacquer in Japan takes the place not only of varnish, but of the coatings of oil paint also that are applied to wood and other substances in the West. From the earliest times a

¹ The term *urushi* is applied to the raw material from which the *nuri-mono*, the lacquered article, is prepared.

large part of the wood-work, in the interior of Buddhist temples, was covered with lacquer. Again, many of the old statues of the Nara and Fujiwara periods are coated by what is known (I know not why) as 'dry lacquer.'¹

But the description of the processes of lacquering that we find in European works applies, for the most part, rather to the manufacture of small articles of high finish, and this, indeed, is the aspect that most interests us here.

The ground, then, we may consider as a most accurately fitted box or other framework of wood. The *hinoki* pine or the paulownia (*kiri*) is the wood chosen in most cases; it may often be of extreme thinness. This frame of wood may receive, in the first place, a coating of some kind of lute—in any case the joints, knots, and other imperfections are carefully covered over. After this preliminary luting has been ground quite smooth, the whole surface is covered with a lining of a special kind of paper or sometimes of fine hempen cloth. Other coatings of a luting composed of rice paste and of powdered porcelain mixed with lacquer are now applied; one or more coatings of pure lacquer follow, and the surface is now rubbed smooth with charcoal. These preliminary processes are indeed often even more complicated. But in those cases where the grain of the wood is exposed in the finished

¹ This was effected, in some cases at least, by coating the interior of a mould with lacquer, adding successive coats to this, and finally filling up the interior with some clay-like material.

article, there is, of course, no coating of luting or putty.

The object in hand, rubbed smooth by means of fine-grained charcoal, now passes into the charge of the true lacquer artist to be decorated in various ways. The attraction of the piece may consist solely in the beauty of the uniform ground, and, indeed, the merit of some of the most expensive lacquer depends solely upon this exquisite finished surface. In other cases the surface may be more or less covered with designs of various nature—often with elaborate patterns and pictures executed in gold lacquer. To confine ourselves to what may be called the normal type of lacquer, these designs may be either in relief (*taka makiye*) or the surface may remain almost smooth as in the ordinary *hira makiye*.

In far the larger number of objects of artistic lacquer the ground will be found to be either black or of an orange-brown tint—in both cases the decoration is given by gold applied in various ways. The black tint is given to the lacquer before application by the addition of certain ingredients that correspond closely to those used in the preparation of our ordinary writing-ink (acetate of iron, etc.). In the case of the orange tints the natural colour of the lacquer is strengthened, generally by the addition of gamboge. The effect is frequently heightened, and a surface resembling aventurine is obtained by the addition of fine metallic particles—not always gold, for in the honey-coloured base any white spangles take on a golden aspect.

It is thus that the famous *nashiji* (pear-rind) ground is produced—perhaps the best known variety of Japanese lacquer. But gold may be applied in many other ways—it may be dusted on to the still moist ground, it may be added piece by piece in small rectangular fragments of foil (*kirigane*), or the gold may float in flakes in the substance of the lacquer (*giyōbu nashiji*). The lacquer may at times be so charged with metallic particles as to assume the aspect of a dull gold ground. The greatest stress is indeed laid by the Japanese on the various qualities of their gold grounds, and they are often associated with the names of famous artists.

I may here mention that all kinds of orange lacquer suffer in time from the action of light, especially of direct sunlight—the surface becomes of a dull brown tint. The black lacquer, on the other hand, either suffers no alteration by a similar exposure, or changes in places to a rich, deep brown hue—a change, indeed, which rather improves the appearance of the object.

A very important part has always been played by the various substances inlaid or incorporated in the lacquer ground. Numerous varieties of what we should include as mother-of-pearl (*aogai* and *raden*) have been employed in this way from a very early period. The finest effect is that obtained by the use of the large haliotis or ear-shell (*awabi*) so abundant in Japanese waters, but a species of *turbo* and several kinds of bivalves are also employed.¹ The shell is cut in various

¹ The term *aogai* should, I think, be confined to the shell of the haliotis and *raden* to the mother-of-pearl from oyster-like bivalves.

ways—at times the whole surface may be covered by a mosaic of little slips of mother-of-pearl placed perpendicularly and at various angles to one another. The decoration of the scabbard (invariably made from the wood of the magnolia) is a special branch of the lacquerer's art. In this the *aogai* or mother-of-pearl inlay plays an important part; in other cases the lacquer is superimposed on a base of hempen strands (*ō-maki*), or again of shark-skin (see below).

Other substances have at one time or another been in favour for inlay on lacquer grounds. We find plaques and threads of various metals—even pewter was called into use by one school—small slabs of porcelain and inlays or studs of ivory and coral.

Of the highly elaborated variety of smooth *maki-ye* known as *togidashi* I shall speak further on. I must now briefly enumerate some of what may be called the abnormal classes of Japanese lacquer. Most of these varieties, I may add, have their origin in China, and are more or less founded on the carved 'Pekin' lacquer of that country.

Tsui-sho and *Tsui-koku* are the Japanese names for the carved red and black lacquers that are acknowledged to be of Chinese origin. The red *tsui-sho* is coloured by cinnabar; the design in high relief on diapered ground should be cut wholly in the lacquer itself. In another variety the red and black lacquer is applied in successive layers, and the effect is brought out by cutting the surface in deep grooves.

The *Kamakura Bori* is essentially carved wood-work.

Of such painted carvings I have already spoken in the last chapter; that the ground may be exposed in places by rubbing is of subsidiary importance. Some of the old carved figures thus coloured, dating from the Kamakura days (thirteenth century), are of considerable artistic merit.

In the closely allied *suri-hagashi* or 'rubbed off' lacquer ware a thin coat of red lacquer is laid over a brown or black ground, and this upper coat rubbed off in places; in other cases the colours are applied in reversed order.

Guri lacquer was introduced from China in the seventeenth century. In this variety coats of various colours are superimposed—a slow and tedious process—and these layers are exposed by cutting a scroll pattern of V-shaped grooves.

Tsugaru lacquer.—Here the layers of lacquer are of various colours, and they are applied in thinner coats than in the last case. A marbled, clouded, or striped effect is the result of undulations in the successive layers. These are laid upon an uneven base of putty and are subsequently polished.

Wakasa lacquer is similar to the last, but golden yellow and orange tints prevail. Leaves or pine-needles are often impressed on the base, and the moulds thus produced are lined with gold and silver foil; the whole is then covered with transparent lacquer. This and the preceding are local products and curiosities of little artistic value.

The *Same-gawa Nuri* is applied especially to the sheaths



EAGLE AND FAWN

Gold, upon black lacquer, covering basket-work box

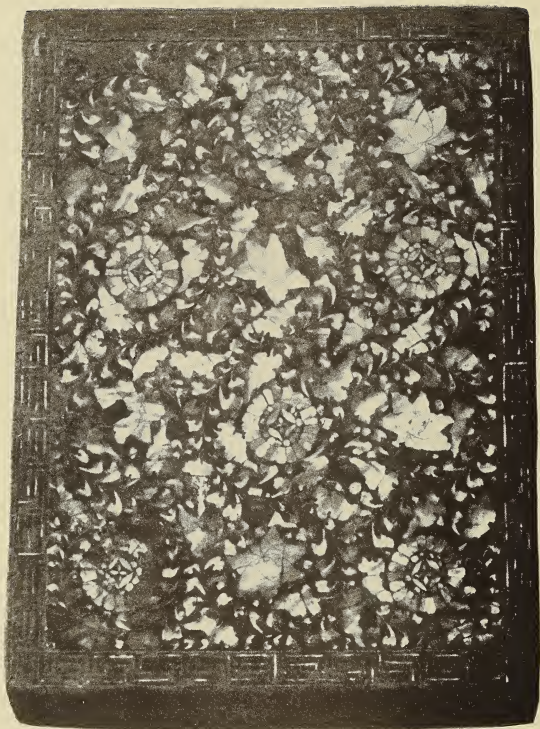
of swords. It is formed by pressing down the skin of the shark (or rather ray?) on the putty ground, the white granulations being ground flat before the application of the lacquer. The unpolished skin, on the other hand, is often found on the grip of the sword or dagger.

There are other names given to lacquer that have their origin less in the material than in the manner of decoration applied to it. Thus in the *Chinkin-bori* the design is engraved—with a rat's tooth, it is said—and the incised lines accentuated with gold.

We have seen that from the earliest times lacquer has been applied to the interior decoration of Buddhist temples. But on the whole, in the case of this art more, perhaps, than any other, we are brought into relation with the domestic life of the Japanese, especially with the life of the womenfolk. Again, as far as the decoration of lacquer is concerned, it is the native Yamato school that gives the dominant note. There follows from these two facts, and also in a measure from the nature of the process involved, a certain want of strength and character in the decoration of Japanese lacquer—a tendency to the *mièvre* and the effeminate. This is indeed a tendency too often conspicuous in the native art of Japan, one that asserts itself, above all, when the influence of the more masculine and restrained art of China is not given any play. We feel this weakness more in the case of large objects than of small. A style of design and a handling that are delightful upon an *inro* become trifling and ineffective when covering the surface of a large cabinet.

The Japanese have little that can be called furniture in their rooms; what there is, or rather was, is to be found chiefly in the women's apartments of the princely mansions. All such furniture, to say nothing of the smaller objects, would be lacquered *en suite*, and each piece would bear the *mon* or badge of the head of the house. In a suite of this kind would be included more than one cabinet—graceful combinations of cupboards and shelves—boxes of all sizes for clothes, the *kimono-kake*, or clothes-rack, and a set of toilet articles, including such things as mirror-stands, bowls and basins for washing, others for the process of blackening the teeth. There were also small low tables and reading-desks. The men, on the other hand, had their sword-rack (*katana-kake*), that took its place on the *toko-no-ma*, and the lacquered chests in which the armour was kept. The writing-boxes containing the ink-stone (*suzuri-bako*), and the larger boxes (*bunko*) for papers and manuscripts, were always decorated *en suite*. Some of the most exquisite designs in lacquer are to be found on these boxes, above all on the inner side of the lid. This part was well seen when the box was in use; the lid was then laid face downwards on the mats. The lacquer has here generally suffered less than in other parts from abrasion and from the action of light.

The lunch or picnic set (*sage-ju*) afforded the lacquerer a great variety of plane and curved surfaces for his decoration. The attendant sake-bottle is more often of another material; it may take the form of a gourd or of a metal vessel, enamelled or plain.



BOX FOR BUDDHIST SUTRAS

Black lacquer inlaid with mother-of-pearl and copper wire. Eighth century (?)

It was, however, upon the various little objects connected with the burning of incense, above all upon those in use in the elaborate *kō-awase* or incense game, that perhaps the most delicate work of the lacquerer is to be found. The name of *kō-gō* (incense-box) may be safely applied to any of those delicate little boxes of gold lacquer, at times of fantastic shape, that are often valued at many times their weight in gold. The larger and more solid boxes, on the other hand, served to hold sweetmeats.

But it is after all the *inrō*, the 'seal case' of which I have already spoken, that in variety, both of material and decoration, gives the widest field to the collector. On these little nests of boxes—they were used, in later days at least, rather for holding medicine in the form of pills and powders—from the early eighteenth century onwards, the signature of the artist may often be found. It is indeed from the study of these signatures—so rare on larger objects—that what we know of the later history of lacquer has in great measure been gleaned. These *inro* may be compared to our gold snuff-boxes of the eighteenth century; as works of art they perhaps stand on a higher level, while fortunately they are within the compass of a more modest purse.

The earliest examples of lacquer are preserved in the treasuries of the temples. They appeal to the Japanese as much by their historical and religious associations as by their artistic merit. They take the form for the most part of boxes in which are preserved the holy *sutra*—the special scripture of the Buddhist sect that

owns the temple—or again some relic of the founder of the sect—his *kesa* or scarf, for example, or perhaps his fan or staff. Not a few of these relics lay claim to a great age; some of them may be traced back on good evidence to the seventh and eighth centuries. But it would seem that in some cases, at least, the lacquer-box that holds them has been entrusted at later times to some famous lacquerer to be restored, or perhaps even reproduced, in close imitation, of course, of the already decayed original. The decoration that we find on the earlier work generally consists of floral diapers, or again of flying cranes or other birds, uniformly scattered over the surface, interspersed, it may be, with Buddhist emblems. A favourite motive was the phoenix, or again the *karyobin*, a bird with the head of an angel. It was not till the eleventh or twelfth century that we come upon figures of Buddhist saints. A little later—say in the thirteenth century—both shell and gold inlay were at times applied to lacquer, and to this period belong the earliest imitations of Chinese methods, as in the Kamakura lacquer described on page 169.

But as in the case of much else in Japanese art, it is in connection with the court of the later Shoguns of the Ashikaga family, above all of Yoshimasa (1449-1471, see page 55), that the definite history of Japanese lacquer begins. Then it was that a succession of cultured experts—Koami, Soami, and their followers—gave a new direction to the art. Gold lacquer in relief (*taka makiye*), and the *nashiji* or avanturine grounds,



LID OF INK-STONE BOX
Fifteenth century lacquer

so frequent in later days, take their origin from this period. As early as the time of the Shogun Yoshimitsu (1368-1393), specimens of lacquer were offered, it is said, as presents to the Chinese emperor, and somewhat later Chinese artisans came to Japan to study the processes of the native lacquerers. Koami Dōchō, the founder of a famous line of lacquerers, borrowed his designs from the artists of the Tosa school; the name of Mitsunobu is mentioned in this connection. Koami thus gave a direction to the decoration that was followed in the main by the great lacquerers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

In all probability the original stimulus to the glorious development of the lacquerer's art in the seventeenth century is to be sought in the rich decoration of the palaces and castles built by Hideyoshi. According to the Japanese, the art of Koyetsu, who was born as early as 1558 (see above, page 74), was an outcome of this Momoyama period, and Koyetsu, as a lacquerer, was followed by his pupil Soyetsu, who carried over his style of work to the great days of the Joken-in period at the end of the seventeenth century.

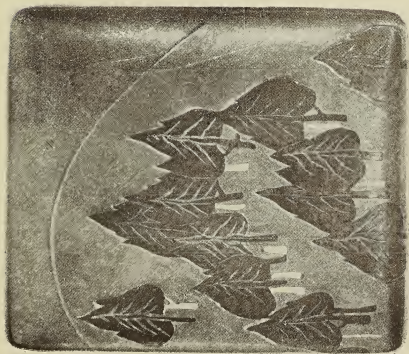
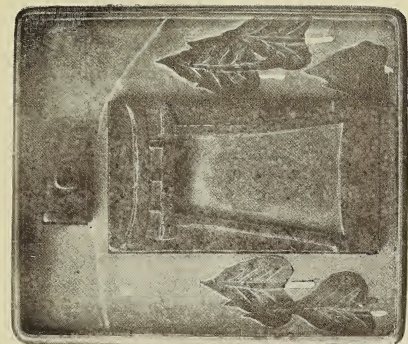
Soon after the establishment in power of the Tokugawa Shoguns we hear in more than one case of an order being given from the court at Yedo, on the occasion of a wedding or of the installation of a new prince, for complete equipments in lacquer, similar to those I have spoken of above. The famous suite of

furniture that Koami Nagashige made on the occasion of the marriage of the daughter of one of the earlier Tokugawa Shoguns is still in the possession of a branch of that family. It comprises several cabinets, a Buddhist shrine, boxes for books, and an equipment for the incense game. One style of decoration, in rich gold lacquer in relief on a *nashiji* ground, is carried through the whole series; and so again of the subjects represented, these are all taken from the 'bird songs' in the *Genji Monogatari*.

The name of Soyetsu, the follower of Koyetsu, may at times be found inscribed on an inro, and, as I have said, from his time to the present the history of the lacquerer's art may be best traced in the minute signatures that should be sought for either on the base or on the 'risers' of these little medicine-cases.¹

Of Kōrin (died 1716) as a painter I have already spoken. As a lacquerer he belongs to the school of Koyetsu and Soyetsu. His best work is probably to be found on the lids of ink-stone boxes (*suzuri-bako*). His use of large surfaces of mother-of-pearl and of pewter, and his bold—at times outrageously bold—treatment of natural objects have found many skilful imitators, above all in the early days of the nineteenth century. It was then that Kōrin's fame was revived by the publications of an enthusiastic admirer, the priest

¹ Of Kwanshosai, a famous lacquerer of the eighteenth century, it is related that he refused to make anything but inro. As to this master, on the ground of the merit of his work, was granted a small title of nobility, it would seem that some special distinction was attached to this branch of the lacquerer's art.



INK-STONE BOX
Gold lacquer, inlaid with lead. By Korin

Hō-itsu (see p. 76). Kōrin's rich grounds of matt gold lacquer, so much admired by the Japanese, have been the despair of later imitators of his work.

In the next generation a new direction was given to what we may still consider as the school of Soyetsu and Kōrin by Ogawa Haritsu, known as Ritsuo (1663-1747). Ritsuo's inlays take the form of detached plaques of pottery (an art in which he profited by the productions of Kenzan, Kōrin's brother), of medallions of ivory, jade or metal, above all of big seal-like reliefs of a kind of lacquer resembling bronze; examples of one or other of these may be seen discreetly scattered over the surface. The ground is often of a natural wood, with the beautiful grain brought into relief. Ritsuo's mark may be found on a little circular stud of pottery, inscribed with the character *Kwan*, and this is seldom missing on his work.

Hanzan, the pupil of Ritsuo, worked in a similar style. His designs are less daring than those of his master. The finial roof-tile of pottery that was a favourite *motif* with Ritsuo is replaced in Hanzan's work by an inlay of fish and shells in which mother-of-pearl plays an important part. Work of this kind is often found on inros bearing Hanzan's signature.

But it must not be imagined that this boldly decorative school that we associate above all with Kōrin (it is sometimes called impressionist, I know not for what reason) is by any means representative of the lacquer of the Tokugawa period. The *makeie* of the Ashikaga and Momoyama periods—the black or orange lacquer

decorated in various ways with gold—was carried on by two great families of lacquerers, the Koma and Kajikawa stems, many of whose members during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries held official appointments under the Shoguns.

Of the Koma family, one Koma Kiui, not the first of his race, was lacquerer to the court as early as the seventeenth century. Koma Kiuhaku, who died in 1715, was famous for his grounds, red in one light, gold in another; his *togidashi* work (see below, p. 179) is unsurpassed. His grandson, another Kiuhaku, who died in 1794, was official lacquerer to the Shogun and to the temples of Nikko. He was followed by Kwansai, Kioriu, and Bunsai.

The Kajikawa family acquired an equally distinguished position, but as their work is generally signed with the family name alone, it is difficult in this case to specialise. Their best work probably dates from the end of the eighteenth century. It was for the gold lacquer made by one of the later members of the Kajikawa family that Shibayama carved his little faces and other inlays of ivory.

This latter *genre*, in which a minutely finished ivory inlay, together with studs of coral and slips of mother-of-pearl, plays an important part, has had a great vogue among English collectors. The successors of Shibayama have provided many small objects for the European market in this very pretty but rather trifling style of work.

In addition to the members of the Koma and



INK-STONE BOX

Gold lacquer on Nashiji ground

Kajikawa families I must mention two great lacquerers of the early or middle part of the eighteenth century. Shiomi Masanari and Yamamoto Shunsho were famous for their delicate designs, often indeed elaborate little pictures, floating as it were in a smooth, dark ground. This is the *togidashi* style, in which the design is only brought out by subsequent polishing. The Shunsho family continued in the same lines for several generations; their signature is indeed found on many remarkable pieces of lacquer executed in other styles. I should mention, too, that the *togidashi* work of more than one of the Koma family has never been surpassed.

One more name remains to be recorded—that of Shibata Zeshin, who died at a great age as late as 1891. The gold lacquer of Zeshin is in no way inferior to that of the Komas and the Kajikawas. He was, too, an authority on the history of lacquer, and it is to his memoirs that we are indebted for the little we know of his immediate predecessors. Zeshin, a Yedo man, lived the life of a simple artisan, leaving at his death little more than the materials for the work he had in hand.

One word, finally, of the lacquer imported into Europe in the eighteenth century, and employed above all as panels for furniture. Some of this may have been commissioned from the Dutch merchants at Nagasaki, but much of it—very inferior work—was probably made at Canton by Chinamen. Madame de Pompadour laid out much money on this lacquer, and at a later time Marie Antoinette made a large collec-

tion, which is now in the Louvre. But at times examples of lacquer of a better quality were brought over; of exceptional merit is the chest, with Buddhist emblems, from the Hamilton collection, now at South Kensington.¹ All this eighteenth-century lacquer is decorated with gold in low relief on a black ground. (Mr. Huish, in his book on Japanese Art, has collected some information on these points.)

Of not less interest, historically, are some examples of Japanese lacquer acquired by a German prince as far back as the end of the sixteenth century, probably from the Jesuit missionaries. These take the form of boxes and small cabinets, with scattered decorations of birds and flowers on a black ground. They may now be seen in the National Museum at Munich.

¹ A companion chest is in the collection of Sir Trevor Lawrence. It is said that these boxes belonged formerly to Cardinal Mazarin.

CHAPTER XII

CERAMIC ART

Unglazed Pottery—Influence of the *Cha-no-yu*—Toshiro—Shonsui—Korean Potters—Yatsushiro and Satsuma Pottery—Origin of Hizen Porcelain—Kakiyemon—Imari Ware—Kioto Kilns—Ninsei—Kenzan—Zengoro—Kishiu and Kaga Wares—Owari Porcelain.

I HAVE already spoken of the pottery found in the dolmen tombs (see chap. I.), and it has been made evident that considerable progress had been made in the art before the introduction of Buddhism to Japan. Of this pottery there is a remarkable collection in the British Museum, and a series of vessels thrown on the wheel, often of considerable size and of elaborate shapes, may be there compared with examples of a similar ware found in Korean tombs. This unglazed pottery probably belongs for the most part to the first four centuries of our era, and corresponds in a measure to the ceramic art of the somewhat earlier Han dynasty of China; but it must be confessed that our knowledge of the early Chinese wares is very scanty. There are, however, none of the usual Chinese motives to be found on this Japanese pottery. The hand-moulded figures that surround the necks of the vessels, and the scratched decoration, recall rather

some of the early ware of the eastern Mediterranean. In other cases the strange shapes call to mind the primitive pottery of Mexico and Peru.

There follows a gap in the history of Japanese ceramics. If in early days a good start was made, this was lost later on. Of the pottery of the Nara and the Fujiwara periods there is nothing to say. The few objects of pottery in the Shoso-in collection (see p. 30) are attributed by Japanese experts to foreign kilns; some specimens of a grey-green glazed *fayence*, of a celadon type, are by them referred to Cochin-China. On the great question of the origin of ceramic glazes we receive no assistance from Japan. There is, indeed, in this case no proof of the existence of any glazed ware before the twelfth century. Vessels of a kind of kaolinic stoneware,¹ some of large size for storing rice, others smaller for domestic use, attributed to Fujiwara times, are highly prized by the Japanese collector.

If we were dependent solely on the Japanese chronicles, we should have to believe that the potter's wheel was first introduced from Korea as late as the eighth century. We know, however, that the wheel was used by the dolmen builders long before that time, and we have here an interesting example of the triumph of the evidence of the spade over that of the literary record. There is, however, no doubt that in later times, down indeed to the end of the sixteenth century,

¹ I use this term for a class of hard-paste pottery, differing little in composition from porcelain, but quite opaque. This is a class of ware very characteristic of Japanese kilns.

whatever progress the Japanese made in the ceramic art was due either to the assistance of Korean immigrants or to what was learnt by the Japanese potters who travelled in China.

We must probably look upon the introduction from China of the use of tea—this was in the thirteenth century—as the first stimulus to the production of somewhat finer wares, just as in western Europe, three or four centuries later, it was the spread of the habit of tea-drinking that led to so great a demand for oriental porcelain.

But the introduction of tea to Japan was associated with the propagation of certain Chinese doctrines. The great influence upon the arts of this time of the Zen or contemplative sect I have already dwelt upon. When Kato Shiroyemon (Toshiro), the potter of Owari, set out for China he was accompanied by a Buddhist priest, and these early explorers doubtless owed whatever facilities of travel there were in those days to the relations kept up between the monasteries of the same sects in China and Japan. Toshiro probably studied the potter's art in the province of Fukien. It would have been his aim, no doubt, on his return to imitate the old dark-glazed Fukien porcelain—those 'hare-fur' tea-bowls, above all, of which there is a beautiful specimen in the British Museum. In any case Toshiro, on his return from China, settled at the village of Seto in Owari (this was in the year 1223), and so great was the fame of the ware that he there produced that crockery of all kinds came in time to be known as *Setomono*, and this

term is even to-day equivalent in Japan to our expression 'china.' But the ware that Toshiro made was not a true porcelain—that did not come till much later. It is of importance to us, however, as it is probably the origin of that most characteristic group of Japanese ceramics—the little jars and bowls used from Toshiro's time to our own in the ceremonial preparation of tea.

Nothing is more remarkable in the history of Japanese art than the fact that, for the next three or four hundred years, the ceramic outturn of the country was, as far as we know it, practically confined to wares of this class. Specimens of the monochrome porcelain of the Sung and Yuan dynasties, as well as of the blue and white wares of the Ming period, doubtless reached the country—the old Chinese celadon was, we know, much admired—but it is doubtful whether successful imitations of any of these wares were produced in Japan until the sixteenth century was well advanced. During the Ashikaga period, neither among the artistic *coterie* that surrounded the Shogun, nor in the service of the Buddhist temples, was any place found for the brilliant porcelain made for the Ming emperors. In domestic use the place of porcelain was taken by lacquered bowls of wood. The advance made in the art in China during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries found no favour with the *Cha-jin*; the imitations of the old Sung wares (and only of certain sombrely glazed types of these) satisfied their æsthetic demands. Even in later times the same restraint has confined for the most part the range of the native connoisseur and

collector to the most simple and primitive kinds of pottery. The greatest attention was paid to minute variations in the paste, to the shape and direction of the 'thread-mark'—the *itogiri*—on the base, still more to the nature of the glaze. There is indeed a great charm in some of these dark-coloured irregular glazes which take the place of the patina on old bronzes—they are often as grateful to the touch as to the eye.

I have called attention to the deficiencies of our national collections when speaking of other arts of Japan. In the case of the pottery we are better off. We have in the British Museum a representative collection of Japanese pottery brought together, for the most part, by the late Sir A. W. Franks, and in this series the simple wares of the *Cha-no-yu* are well represented. At South Kensington, again, may be found what was intended to have been a representative collection of Japanese ceramics; it was first brought together for the Philadelphia Exhibition of 1876. I am afraid that in this case too much reliance should not be placed on the attributions of some of the examples for which a great age is claimed.

The doctrines of the Zen sect—ascetic and conservative in tendency—had an influence upon the ceramic art not less than upon the painters of the time. It was the *Cha-jin*, the masters of the *Cha-no-yu*—priests or adherents of the Zen sect almost to a man—who laid down the law in all that concerned the appreciation of the merits of pottery. When

Yoshimasa, the Ashikaga Shogun of whom I have so often spoken, collected around him at Higashiyama, after his nominal retirement from his public duties, the most prominent representatives of the artistic culture of the time, it was this influence that was dominant.

This was at the end of the fifteenth century. At that time the wares most appreciated were of Korean origin; other specimens came from the Chinese province of Fukien and perhaps from regions further to the south; but the porcelain of the great imperial factory of King-te-chen seems to have been little known or at least little appreciated. Toshiro's imitations of the 'Kien' ware were highly prized, but the native kilns could so far produce little beyond coarse varieties of stoneware and earthenware.

How great a value was set upon some of these old sombre bowls and jars we can glean from the record of the prices paid for them, even as early as the sixteenth century. There are instances when the opportune gift to the Shogun of some historic bowl has led to the political advancement of the donor. For the element of historic association—the fact that the piece in question had formerly belonged to some hero or saint—was doubtless a factor in the money value.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, a skilled Japanese potter, one Gorodayu Shonsui, succeeded in reaching King-te-chen. On his return he was able to make—but only with the materials brought back by him—a passable imitation of the blue and white

ware of the Ming dynasty. Authentic examples of Shonsui's porcelain are highly prized in Japan, and as a consequence often skilfully imitated. But as he was unable to find the materials—the kaolin and the petuntze—in his own country, he can only have turned out a limited amount of fine porcelain with the materials brought back from China.

The starting-point not only of the porcelain, but of all the decorated pottery of Japan—that is, of nearly all among Japanese ceramics that interests the European collector—is to be found in the results of the great invasion of Korea at the end of the sixteenth century. After having swept the country bare and brought about the final ruin of the native arts and industries, more than one of the Japanese generals brought back with them to the provinces that they ruled a band of Korean artisans—potters above all—and it is to these men that we must in the first place attribute the great advance of the potter's art in Japan in the seventeenth century. For the origin both of the porcelain of Hizen and of the decorated faience of Satsuma, the Japanese acknowledge their indebtedness to these enforced emigrants from Korea.

Not but that the Korean potter had not found his way to Japan before this time. The Raku ware, the very quintessence of all that appealed to the men of the *Cha-no-yu*, had its origin with a Korean who settled in Japan early in the sixteenth century. This dark handmade ware 'of almost impertinent simplicity' (I take the expression from Captain Brinkley, our

first authority in all that concerns Japanese ceramics) was much appreciated by Sen-no-Rikyu, the great *Cha-jin* of the Taiko's time. That made by Chojiro at this time has been held in especial honour ever since. The term *raku*—felicity—I should add, is taken from the gold seal given by the Taiko to this Chojiro. The raku ware of later days—it is still made by the descendants of the original Korean potter—is often decorated with reticulated lines in gold, but the primitive aspect of both paste and glaze is rigorously maintained.

Of the other wares, made in the first place by these Korean immigrants, that have found favour with the Japanese, I will only mention two varieties—first, the Yatsushiro-yaki (the word *yaki* is about equivalent to our term 'ware') with its 'encaustic' decorations of clouds and cranes, white upon a grey ground; and secondly, the pottery made at Takatori. Here in the seventeenth century the *flambé* wares of China were imitated. This Takatori pottery is above all prized by the native connoisseur. In addition to the little bowls and jars for the *Cha-no-yu*, vases for flowers and pots for holding dwarf plants were manufactured of this ware.

It will perhaps come as a surprise to many to find the faience of Satsuma, a name that calls up with us associations of so different a character, classed with these quaint and modest wares. But the pottery made for the Lord of Satsuma, in the early seventeenth century, by the potters that he had brought back from



BOWL WITH GREY CRACKLE GLAZE, DECORATED WITH SNOW-COVERED FIR-TREES
Kioto ware, eighteenth century

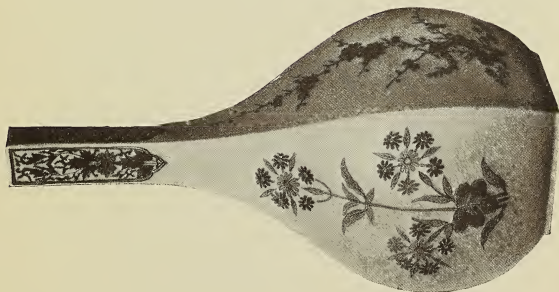
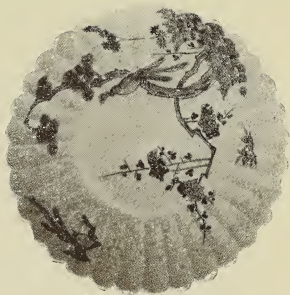
Korea, belongs distinctly to this primitive class—the paste was of a reddish tint and the glaze was mostly of a quiet *flambé* type. Nor again had the highly prized ware, painted with designs by the Kano artist Tangen (see p. 71), made at the end of the seventeenth century, much in common with the ‘old Satsuma’ that was so much in vogue with us a few years since. The ivory-white paste, the soft velvety glaze with almost imperceptible crackle and the delicate and restrained polychrome decoration of the rare pieces of genuine ‘old Satsuma’ that have reached this country, are to be credited to a revival of the Satsuma kilns at the end of the eighteenth century. But this revived ware was already in full decline before the opening of the country to Europeans sixty years later. When, however, it was found that this beautiful fayence was so much admired in Europe and that such high prices were given for it, some enterprising merchants established a manufactory in the neighbourhood of Yokohama, and it was there—at first at least with clay imported from Satsuma—that the large vases, decorated with grotesque figures of Buddhist saints, were manufactured for the European market.

It is usual when treating of ceramics to draw a sharp line between all the forms of the technically inferior faience—pottery in the narrower sense of the word—and the wares with hard, white, and above all translucent paste that are classed as porcelain. But in the case of the ceramics of Japan, such a division is not convenient. On the one hand, the line of demarcation

between the two families is not a definite one—there are some wares that differ little in composition from true porcelain which are not in the least transparent ; so again, looking at the matter from a historical point of view, we find that the enamelled decoration first used upon the true porcelain of Hizen has been carried over to many later developments of fayence in other parts of the country.

Shonsui, on his return from China early in the sixteenth century (see above, p. 186), was unable to discover the materials with which to make a true porcelain. And yet he settled in a part of northern Kiushiu where similar materials abound. It was reserved for Risampai, a Korean, to recognise in the decomposed trachytic rocks of this district an equivalent of the kaolin that had so long been the secret of the Chinese. This discovery led to the foundation of the famous kilns of Hizen ; here before long an industry was developed second in importance only to that of King-te-chen.

This was at the end of the sixteenth century. It was not, however, till the next generation that the great advance was made, and that for the first time in Japan a ware was turned out decorated with coloured enamels applied over the glaze. The merit of this discovery must be shared between two potters of Imari, Tokuzayemon and Kakiyemon. These men founded their style of decoration upon the enamelled porcelain of late Ming times, upon that of Wan-li above all. But in addition, perhaps even in this early time,



IMARI PORCELAIN
Kakiyemon style, Seventeenth century

some European influence made itself felt. Kakiyemon has had the honour of giving his name to a ware—the ‘Old East Indian’ of our ancestors—that more than any other influenced the decoration of the first porcelain made in Europe. The important part played by this Kakiyemon ware in the history of porcelain was first recognised by the late Sir A. W. Franks, and he brought together a series of characteristic specimens which may now be studied in the British Museum. The milky white paste, the strange motives of the decoration and the use of cobalt enamel *over* the glaze, distinguish this ware from the now better known and later porcelain of Imari that was classified generally as ‘Old Japan’ in the eighteenth century.

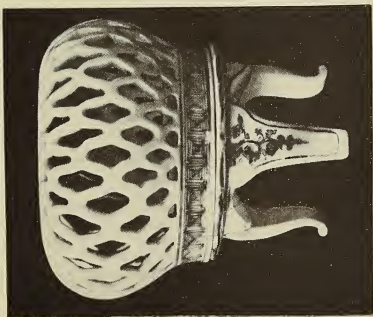
In spite of its long popularity in Europe, very little is known of the conditions under which this later style of decoration—that found on the porcelain that we now distinguish as ‘Imari’—was developed. This ware is remarkable for the rich effects that are obtained by the use of a very few colours. A cobalt blue *under* the glaze forms the foundation of the design; to the surface of the glaze is added an opaque enamel of iron red, and the effect is heightened by more or less gilding. Other colours—manganese purple, green and yellow—are quite subsidiary. It is this porcelain that the Dutch exported from Nagasaki for nearly two hundred years—it seems to have first appeared in Europe at the end of the seventeenth century. The ‘Old Japan’ was indeed essentially a ware made for

foreign use. It was at one time largely copied by the Chinese at King-te-chen.

Of a more *recherché* character were certain varieties of porcelain made at some other kilns in the neighbourhood of Imari. These kilns were established under princely patronage during the course of the seventeenth century. The wares produced were mostly blue and white in imitation of Ming types. This porcelain did not come into the market, and as a consequence it has always been highly prized by the Japanese. The most important of these princely wares were the Mikōchi yaki made for the daimio of Hirado and the Okōchi yaki for the Nabeshima family, the lords of Hizen.

To the uninitiated European, the simple wares of the raku class are of little interest. On the other hand the Japanese connoisseur looked with contempt upon the over-decorated porcelain of Imari that found its way to Europe either in the Dutch ships or by way of Canton—in his opinion such ware, like much else of the same character, was good enough for women and children—or for the western barbarian.

But there is one group of Japanese ceramics that appeals to the connoisseur both of the East and the West. The various wares made since the middle of the seventeenth century in a number of kilns situated in the suburbs of Kioto, lie on both sides of the line separating faience from porcelain—in the decoration of most of them enamel colours play an important part. But what distinguishes the earlier examples, at any



IMARI PORCELAIN
Eighteenth century

rate, of these wares is that they are essentially the work of the 'artist-potter,' in many cases of men of culture, of artists distinguished in other lines, often of votaries of the *Cha-no-yu*.

The most famous name in the annals of Japanese ceramics is undoubtedly that of Nomura Seisuke, better known by his 'studio' name of Ninsei. A man of good family, trained in the traditions of the *Cha-no-yu*, Ninsei was the first who broke away from the narrow traditions of the old schools. The secrets of the application of coloured enamels had about the middle of the seventeenth century been brought to Kioto from the Hizen kilns, and Ninsei applied them with the skill and refinement of a cultured artist to more than one variety of pottery—for he worked at various kilns in the neighbourhood of Kioto. We are told that the artists of the then flourishing Kano school supplied Ninsei with designs, but it is perhaps not unreasonable to see in the decoration of his pottery more in common with the Tosa painters. In European collections the impression of the little seal with the two characters of his name is sometimes to be discovered on tea bowls of a pale-buff ware, with fine geometrical crackle. But undoubted specimens of his work command so high a price in Japan, that few of them are likely to have left the country.

Ninsei may be regarded as the artistic father of more than one famous Kioto kiln. None of these in native estimation holds a more distinguished place than that of Iwakura, where was made a ware whose paste and

glaze rival in charm those of Satsuma; but this Iwakura ware is little known in Europe. With us most of these tender, pale-buff pastes, with more or less irregular crackle, are classed as Awata (when, indeed, the more ambitious name of Satsuma is not applied to them). The old Awata fayence is an eminently picturesque ware; the predominant note of the enamels is a rich combination of blues and greens heightened by gilding. But the commercial spirit early seized on these potters, and already, thirty years ago, the Awata kilns were turning out tea and coffee services of the poorest European shapes, and these were put on the market in London and Paris at derisory prices.

The surprising variety and the originality of much of the faience made in these Kioto kilns during the late seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, have made these wares very popular among European collectors. But even now picturesque examples may from time to time be picked up at very modest prices. Some of these old potters devoted themselves to the skilful imitation of foreign wares. Hozan, an Awata potter, made some curious copies of Delft pottery (itself, it will be remembered, in its origin based on the blue and white porcelain of China and Japan). Others, as Mokubei, took as a model the richly enamelled stoneware known to the Japanese as *Kochi-yaki*. (Kochi is supposed to represent Cochin-China, but the term was very vaguely used in old days.)

But the most interesting departure was that made



INCENSE-BURNER
Arada Fayence, Eighteenth century

late in the seventeenth century by Ogata Kenzan. Kenzan applied the bold decorative style that is associated with the name of his elder brother, the great painter and lacquerer Kōrin, to the enamelling of pottery. Perhaps in this he carried on the tradition of his predecessor at the beginning of the century—of Kōyetsu, that universal genius of whom I have already spoken. For Kōyetsu—by family inheritance an expert in sword-blades—was a famous potter as well as a worker in lacquer. Kenzan delighted in the juxtaposition of broad masses of colour. If there was any distinct motive in his work (and sometimes there was none)—a branch of plum-blossom, for instance, or a silhouetted pine-tree—this was strictly subordinated to his arrangement of coloured surfaces. The picturesque signature of Kenzan was used also by his son and grandson, themselves skilful potters.

It is doubtful whether any true porcelain was made in the Kyoto kilns before the beginning of the eighteenth century. The earliest produced was probably an imitation of the Chinese celadon, at all times so sought after by the Japanese. I have so far said very little of the blue and white wares (the *Sometsuke*) of Japan. Apart from the outcome of the princely kilns of Hirada and Nabeshima, there is little originality to be found in what the Japanese did in this direction. Blue and white porcelain has indeed been produced in enormous quantities, both for domestic use and for exportation, in the Imari district and in Owari—to a

lesser extent at Kioto. It has always followed on Chinese models, but in spite of the technical excellence of much of the ware, the hard flinty paste and certain peculiarities in the glaze have never allowed the Japanese to attain to the rich and harmonious effects that the potters of King-te-chen have at times obtained with their underglaze cobalt pigments.

As far as Kioto is concerned, nearly all that is of interest in the manufacture of true porcelain is summed up in the work of the Zengoro family. But it is not at Kioto, where indeed the members of this family had long acquired a name as skilful potters, that we first come across a Zengoro as a maker of porcelain. Before the end of the eighteenth century, the court of the Shogun at Yedo had become the centre of the art world of the time. Yearly presents of pottery and porcelain—so Captain Brinkley tells us—were sent up to the capital from the various provincial kilns; and now at Wakayama, the great daimio of Kishiu (the head of one of the three chief branches of the Tokugawa family) established a kiln in the garden of his palace (the *Ō-niwa*). Zengoro was summoned from Kioto to superintend the work. The porcelain produced was an imitation of an early ware of the Chinese, with glazes of three colours. But of these three colours—the *san-tsai* of the *demi grand feu*¹—the yellow was little employed. The glaze was either a monochrome of turquoise blue or a combination of that tint with a manganese purple. This beautiful *Ō-niwa yaki* or

¹ For an explanation of these terms see my book on *Porcelain*.

Kishiu porcelain (called also *Kairaku*, from the honorific seal granted to the potter Zengoro) has been much imitated in later days, especially at a kiln erected near Hiogo, and enormous quantities of an inferior ware were at one time exported to Europe, and more especially to America.

It was, it would seem, this same Zengoro who made a great name by producing—this time at Kioto—a beautiful ware, distinguished by a ground of brilliant coral-red, ostensibly in imitation of an early Ming porcelain. His little cups, covered on the outside with a design in rich gold over the coral ground, and decorated inside with a medallion of cobalt blue of pure tint, were famous for their exquisite finish. This *Yeiraku* porcelain (so called from another seal granted to Zengoro) has had the fate of so many beautiful Japanese wares—our country has been deluged with inferior imitations.

One marked feature of the porcelain and pottery of Japan is the conservative character of the methods of manufacture and of the decoration. None of the improvements brought about by the great viceroys who superintended the King-te-chen kilns in the first half of the eighteenth century appear to have been adopted in Japan. The Japanese kept to their small bee-hive kilns, built in rows, each furnace behind and a little above the one next to it. The use of seggars—the cases that protect the finer wares from the direct action of the fire—was only introduced in quite late times. The new style of decoration that came in

with the Emperors Yung-Ching and Kien-lung never reached Japan. The Japanese potters continued to use their opaque iron-reds. The beautiful transparent crimson tint derived from gold—the prevailing hue that gave its name to the *famille rose*—appears to have been first made use of, and then only tentatively, on the Japanese pottery of the early nineteenth century.

The fact is that during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the great Manchu dynasty of China was almost ignored by the Japanese. The Middle Kingdom was to them the land of the Ming and the earlier dynasties. The Manchu costume, with its closely fitting clothes and its plaited 'pigtail,' never appears on objects of Japanese art. Its place is always taken by the old Chinese dress of the Sung and Ming periods—a Chinaman is always represented in loose flowing robes with hair knotted over the head. And this cannot have been merely the result of ignorance resulting from the closing of the country, for many Chinese visited Nagasaki in the course of the eighteenth century, including, as we have seen, some famous artists.

We may find a good instance of this conservative spirit in the pottery of Inuyama. Here, well on in the nineteenth century, the diapers and other designs of the sixteenth-century Wan-li enamelled porcelain—somewhat rudely laid on in iron-red and green—were closely copied.

It was much the same with the porcelain and pottery of Kaga. Although to us this Kaga ware is best



KUTANI EARTHENWARE, DECORATED WITH POLYCHROME ENAMELS
Early eighteenth century

known by the iron-red decoration that was adopted in the nineteenth century, it was the coloured enamels of the later Ming period that long gave the predominant note to this ware. The Prince of Kaga, though ruling a somewhat remote district, had the reputation of being the richest of the Japanese daimios. As long ago as the end of the seventeenth century, with the aid of an adventurous potter who at the risk of his life had learnt the secret of the Hizen enamels, one of the vassals of this great daimio established the kilns at Kutani, that with many vicissitudes have continued at work up to the present day. On a greyish paste hardly to be reckoned as porcelain, the lustrous enamels, almost unctuous in quality, are laid on with a full brush. The whole surface is generally covered, and a juicy green is the prevailing colour. This older Kaga ware is one of the most original and picturesque that the Japanese have produced—for some of it, at least, it was possibly the stoneware of Cochin-China that served as a prototype. In some of the later specimens we find the *rouge-d'or* sparingly applied to tint the solid white enamels—perhaps the first example in Japan of the use of this pink colour derived from gold. The opaque red decoration that we now associate with the ware of Kutani was probably introduced early in the nineteenth century by one Hoyen Zengoro, a son of the Zengoro of Yeiraku fame.

I have already spoken of the Bun-jin Riu, the literary school of painters, which may be said to correspond with the extreme wing of the Chinese

conservative party. It is curious to come across, early in the nineteenth century, in the very heyday of the splendour-loving worldly life of late Tokugawa times, a revival of this old school which sprung up in connection with a Chinese version of the tea ceremony. Still more interesting is it to discover that this movement was associated with the teaching of a new development of the old Zen doctrines. I mention this movement here, as it had a considerable influence upon not a little of the pottery made at this time—at Kutani, in Owari, and elsewhere. The utensils were imported at the beginning from China; they appear to us to have little merit. I have already pointed out that these new Chinese vessels, as well as the furniture associated with them, may at times be recognised in the coloured prints of the period, especially in some of the *surimono* (see above, p. 118). This ware of the Bai-cha Ō—the ‘old tea-seller’—was imitated by Dohachi, the last great name among the artist-potters of Kioto.

At the same period, from 1810 to 1820, a great expansion was given to the commercial production of blue and white ware at the Kiyomidzu suburb of Kioto, and still more in the Owari district, now the busy centre of a porcelain industry that rivals that of Hizen. Technically, as we have said, the Owari porcelain ranks high. The materials—the kaolin and the china-stone—are derived, as in China and with us in Europe, from the products of decomposition of a true granite, not as in the Imari district from a trachytic rock. But there is

little in the porcelain, either of Kiyomidzu or of Owari, that need detain us here.

I have confined myself strictly to the main lines in this rapid survey of Japanese ceramics. There still remain to be mentioned many interesting wares, specimens of which find their way at times into European collections. The Banko pottery—first that of Ise, then that of Yedo—with its rich decoration of enamels upon a greyish yellow ground of stoneware, the celadon of the Sanda kilns, the stoneware that the potter Mimpei made in the island of Awaji (one variety with marbled glazes in imitation of an old Chinese 'three-colour' combination)—these are but a few of the many developments of the potter's art during the first half of the nineteenth century.

The tendency was always to fall back upon Chinese models, the older the better. This is indeed the general direction taken by the more ambitious efforts of the contemporary potter. His highest aim is to rival the monochrome porcelain of the great Chinese ceramic artists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and these, we must remember, were in name at least again but reproductions of far earlier wares.

There are not a few other branches of art in which the Japanese have excelled, for which no place has been found in this little book. The arrangement of flowers and the laying out of the garden have only received a passing mention. Of the weaving of silk

and of the work of the needle I have said nothing. These are both arts that may be traced back to the dawn of Japanese history. The gorgeous brocades and embroideries made in Japan in later days are indeed well known in Europe. The earlier examples of woven silk, treasured up in the temples and in private collections, are above all of interest for the strange variety of the designs found on them. Some of these are distinctly of exotic character, and in a few rare cases we are carried back to the Persia of Sassanian times.

In the earliest days of Buddhism in Japan, ladies of high birth worked in embroidery the mandara that adorned the inner shrine of the temple. In later days the embroiderers were a recognised class of art craftsmen, and in their ranks more than one famous artist was trained. In combination with the work of the needle we often find on the ground elaborate patterns—in white, for instance, on a coloured field—that were ‘stopped out’ when the stuff was in the hands of the dyer. Fan-shaped or circular medallions thus obtained may be painted by hand with flowers or landscapes in bright colours or sometimes in gold.

The textiles and embroideries of China and Japan have indeed been strangely neglected both by writers on the arts of the Far East, and by those who have devoted themselves to a general treatment of the history of the products of the loom and the needle. I recommend the subject to any one in search of an almost unexplored department of art history.

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