



Detail of decorated box. Japan, c.19th century © Elgin Museum

East Asian Collections in Scottish Museums Introduction

Aims of the Collections Review

The opportunity to conduct a review of the East Asian collections in Scotland arose alongside the development and opening of a new gallery, *Exploring East Asia*, at National Museums Scotland. Initial research revealed that, although there were East Asian collections of fine and decorative arts, archaeology and dress across Scotland, many of these collections lacked detailed object records and provenance information. The East Asia Collections Review contributes toward object identification by sharing specialist knowledge and offering Chinese and Japanese language support where needed. An outcome of the Collections Review is this resource, which lists East Asian collections in Scotland, foregrounds important artefacts, highlights the key collectors and donors, and identifies links between collections with East Asian artefacts. The report provides guidelines for future research and is a legacy resource that can be used to support future appraisals of the collections.

Methodology

This East Asia Collections Review is based on a previous model proposed by Elizabeth Kwasnik in her publication *A Wider World: Collections of Foreign Ethnography in Scotland* (1994). It also takes inspiration from Gregory Irvine's *A Guide to Japanese Art Collections in the UK* (2004), which uses geographical location as an organising principle for the structure of the book. The geographical divisions in this review follow the borders of local authorities, from the north-east to the south-west of Scotland.

The review provides a detailed summary of the contents of each collection, as well as estimates of the number of East Asian artefacts within a partner institution's collection, which derive from information and data supplied by participating museums or extracted from their online databases. Curators from the East and Central Asia Section of the Department of World Cultures at National Museums Scotland conducted site visits to Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums, Dumfries Museum (Dumfries and Galloway Council Arts and Museums Service), Elgin Museum, Falconer Museum (Moray Council), Fife Cultural Trust, The McLean Museum and Art Gallery (Inverclyde Council), The McManus: Dundee's Art Gallery and Museum (Leisure and Culture Dundee), National Galleries of Scotland, Paisley Museum (Renfrewshire Leisure), Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, Special Collections at The Mitchell Library (Glasgow Museums and Collections, Glasgow Life), University of Aberdeen Museums, University of Edinburgh Library, Edinburgh Central Library (City of Edinburgh Council), Perth Museum and Art Gallery (Culture Perth and Kinross), Glasgow Museums Resource Centre, and The Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum. The East Asia Collections Review surveyed 36 collections in total.

At the time of this review, many of the participating museums were in the process of refurbishing their galleries or undertaking building conservation work. This posed challenges as some objects were in a state of decant and difficult to access. We are grateful to the museums and heritage sites that accommodated our visits and responded to our enquiries. While some museums have already transitioned to a central collections management system, others are still in the process of digitising their collections, amalgamating numerous

inventories and consolidating their internal records. It is predicted that the estimates presented in this document will be replaced by precise figures in the future as collections are audited and data cleaned.

This report highlights the key donors of East Asian artefacts that are distinguished by the size of their bequest, or their identity as a known collector, artist or merchant. The list of donors to each museum is not exhaustive. Donors of one or two objects are noted because their presence in accession registers may document their family's connections to society in China, Japan and Korea. Some names are missing because the objects lack provenance or a contemporary donor's wish for anonymity is being respected. For these reasons, the donor information and number of artefacts (listed in table format) will not necessarily accord with the estimated total number of East Asian objects in a given collection. East Asian here refers to China (including Tibet), Japan and Korea (including North and South Korea).

An introduction to each segment explores the financial and cultural interface between collector and the country where the artefacts originated. The review attempts to identify the context of a donor's involvement with East Asia (military, commercial, religious, cultural, etc), before turning to the key objects in a collection. Artefacts are discussed in terms of their material composition, functionality, the circumstances of their manufacture (eg whether the artefact was designed for a domestic market and/or export), and the context in which the object was collected. Opportunities for further research and display are also highlighted.

Within each section, museum collections have been subdivided by country of geographical origin/location of manufacture, and by material composition as follows:

East Asian Collections by Country

China

Japan

Korea

East Asian Collections by Material Composition

1. Works on Paper/Silk/Pith
2. Metalwork
3. Cloisonné and Glass
4. Ceramics
5. Lacquer
6. Carved Ivory/Stone/Wood
7. Textiles (Dress/Embroidery)
8. Fibre/Bamboo/Wooden Structures

9. Numismatics

10. Photography

11. Miscellany