



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

# East Asian Collections in Scottish Museums Conclusions

## Tourism and Trade: Bringing East Asian Objects to Scotland

Iconic objects that reflect Scotland's interest in East Asia have been foregrounded throughout this report and discussed as 'star' objects. This section provides the opportunity to highlight a different kind of artefact that is diminutive in size, ephemeral by design, or regarded as slightly prosaic owing to the object's utilitarian function.

The following items have been selected in order to emphasise how tourism and trade influenced collecting and cross-cultural engagement. Objects that were small and easy to transport were considered collectable or made desirable gifts for friends and relatives back home. An overview of the Scottish collections reveals that certain types of artefacts were popular with travellers in the 18th - 19th centuries.

### **Uchiwa fans with photographic prints**

Japanese rigid fans with hand-coloured prints of geisha on canvas are a technical reworking of the *uchiwa-e* woodblock printed fan. These objects show how a festival product, initially manufactured for Japanese consumers and domestic tourists, was tailored to appeal to the expanding photographic export market including foreign tourists from Europe and America. These fans were possibly produced in the late Meiji (1868-1912) and Taishō periods (1912-1925). The process used to transfer a photographic positive to a textile substrate may have been accomplished using Kodak's Transferotype or a similar lithographic process. Invented in 1888, the Transferotype enabled photographers to transfer a silver-gelatin image onto glass or canvas (John Hannavy, *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, vol. 2, (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 1155). Wakita Mio writes in 'Sites of "Disconnectedness": The Port City of Yokohama, Souvenir Photography, and its Audience' (*Transcultural Studies* (2013/2), p. 119), that the Japanese photographer Kusakabe Kimbei (1841–1934) expanded his commercial goods to include 'silk photo fans and "photographic jewellery"'. Luke Gartlan has also confirmed that some Meiji-era studio catalogues list photographic fans as part of their studio stock for sale. Examples of these fans can be found in Paisley Museum and Arbuthnot Museum and demand more in-depth research.

### **Chinese inlaid kingfisher-feather brooches**

Insect-shaped brooches, inlaid with kingfisher feathers, can be found in collections at Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums, Live Life Aberdeenshire Museums, The Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum, and National Museums Scotland. The extraordinary blue colour of these objects has been achieved using a technique known as *diancui*, or 'dotting with blue feathers', that involves gluing the kingfisher feathers onto a metal ground. The colour and openwork filigree form of the brooch references the elaborate headdresses, hats and hair pins worn by members of the Qing imperial inner court and the wives of high-ranking Han officials (Qin Cao, "'By the Mandate of Heaven": A Kingfisher-feather Headdress in the National Museum of Scotland' in *Orientalisms*, March/April 2019, pp. 79-80). The kingfisher blue feathers were a precious natural resource and, as the population of kingfishers dwindled, feathers were imported from Southeast Asia (Beverley Jackson, *Kingfisher Blue: Treasures of an Ancient Chinese Art*, Berkeley, Toronto: Ten Speed Press, 2001, pp. 13-25). A boom in *diancui* brooches occurred in the 19th century and these objects were imitated in

Europe and America. Manufactured in Guangzhou (Canton), kingfisher-feather brooches proved a successful export commodity. Near identical examples of this type of brooch can be found at local museums across Scotland, suggesting that this object may have been mass-produced for the export goods/tourist market. Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums also has a collection of *diancui* hairpins, believed to be bridal ornaments, displayed in a glazed frame.

### **‘Golden lotus slippers’ or shoes for bound feet**

Small silk-satin shoes, sometimes combined with casts of women’s feet and displayed in wooden boxes, can be found in museums across Scotland. The objects themselves reveal the variety of embroidery and applied decorative designs that were popular throughout China during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Dorothy Ko, in ‘The Body as Attire: The Shifting Meaning of Footbinding in Seventeenth-Century China’ (*Journal of Women’s History*, Vol. 8, No. 4, Winter, 1997, p. 10), has argued that women during the Qing dynasty chose to assert their Han ethnic identity and customs by flouting the official ban on footbinding. Footbinding during the Ming-dynasty (1368-1644) was interpreted as a marker of civility by the Han elite.

The large number of this type of artefact in Scottish collections reflects the zeal of Christian missionaries and doctors, who returned with evidence of a custom that they found both enthralling and barbaric. It has been suggested that more miniaturised versions of the ‘lotus slipper’ were manufactured in China to exploit the market for shoes created by scandalised tourists and missionaries (Dorothy Ko, ‘Footbinding in the Museum’ *Interventions*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Taylor & Francis Ltd., 2003), p. 430). The shoes are worth considering in the broader context of needlecraft and regional embroidery traditions. Since there are over 60 pairs of Chinese embroidered shoes in local collections across Scotland, it is worth engaging in a culturally sensitive dialogue that will promote a deeper understanding of these finely crafted objects.

### ***Netsuke* toggles**

*Netsuke* were designed to function as a toggle for a tobacco pouch or medicine container worn by men suspended from the sash of their kimono. Easily transported and stored by collectors, these artefacts were enjoyed as ‘curios’ and divorced from the functional role for which they were designed. *Netsuke* are made from a variety of materials and range in weight and size. For example, there are small lacquered *hako* (box-shaped) *netsuke*, pierced *ryūsa*, *netsuke* that are shaped like a round, flattened rice cake (J. *manjū*), as well as *katabori* (carved in the round) *netsuke*. The most common type of *netsuke* in museum collections is made from elephant ivory that was exported from Africa directly to Japan, or via China. In addition to *netsuke* carved from wood, horn and bone, ivory from the walrus, narwhal and hornbill was also used. *Netsuke* designs reference Shinto-Buddhist deities, Daoist immortals, and figures from Chinese and Japanese tales and legends. Many *netsuke* are inspired by auspicious themes and were worn as talismans to invoke good luck or protection. The materials used to carve *netsuke* were also believed to possess curative properties.

### **Chinese dining sets ('Trousse' sets)**

Just as tourists today return from their holidays in east and south-east Asia with finely carved or decorated chopsticks, 19th-century travellers and merchants from Scotland were similarly impressed by the economy of their design.

The Chinese dining sets from the 18th and 19th centuries that are found in collections across Scotland are comprised of a hunting knife and bone or ivory chopsticks stored within a sheath. The proliferation of these dining sets shows the extent to which Manchu and Mongol culture had spread under the rule of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). The designs vary depending on the region where the sets were manufactured thus reflecting the aesthetics of a culturally diverse Qing empire. Whereas Han Chinese used pre-cut meat and did not cut up their food into small morsels at meal times, the Manchu were encouraged to preserve their outdoor culture of hunting by cutting meat from the bone. The dining set is designed to hang from the belt, reflecting the practical needs of the Mongol nomadic culture which used these items.

These sets can be found at Live Life Aberdeenshire Museums, Elgin Museum and Stromness Museum.

### **Japanese *ukiyo-e* woodblock prints**

Japanese woodblock-printed ephemera from the 18th and 19th centuries feature in almost every collection surveyed by this report. Known as *ukiyo-e* or 'pictures of the floating world', these designs encompass a variety of subjects from 'pictures of beauties' (*bijinga*) and 'pictures of Kabuki actors' (*yakusha-e*) to privately published prints (*surimono*) that use more lavish printing techniques and incorporate *haikai* and *kyōka* poetry. The earliest *ukiyo-e* collections in Scotland were formed in the 1870s by engineers and educationalists in the employ of the Meiji Government. The prints in their collections were predominantly by 19th-century artists of the Utagawa School. However, many Scottish collectors did not buy their prints in Japan but acquired them in Europe and America through auction houses and art dealers. Alongside figurative works, 'pictures of famous places' (*meisho-e*) and landscape prints (*fūkeiga*) increased in popularity. Utagawa Hiroshige's (1797-1858) large print series titled *Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō* (Hōeidō edition, 1833-1834) and *Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō* (*Kyōka Tōkaidō* series, 1840-1842), were widely collected. Hiroshige excelled in the landscape genre and produced several variations inspired by the network of post-stations that stretched along the eastern coastal route (*Tōkaidō*) from Nihonbashi in Edo (modern day Tokyo) to Kyoto.

Fig. P1384.1-4 'Trousse' dining set, China, 18th-19th century © Live Life Aberdeenshire Museums



Fig. E4487/128 Kingfisher-feather brooches, China, 19th century © The Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum



Fig. A.1887.745.31.9 *Fifty-three Stations of the Tōkaidō: Mishima* (*Kyōka Tōkaidō* series) by Utagawa Hiroshige, 1840-1842 © National Museums Scotland



## A Summary of 'Star Objects' and Key Donors

This survey presents an opportunity to view East Asian collections in Scotland in parallel and consider the different types of objects from China, Japan and Korea that were acquired throughout the 18th and 19th centuries. The provenance of these objects documents moments of contact and exchange between Scotland and East Asia, providing a context as to how the collections were formed. This collections review provides a detailed summary of the objects in collections and identifies the diplomats, regiments, missionaries, merchant seamen, educationalists, entrepreneurs, publicists and tourists who assembled these objects.

One of the earliest collectors of Chinese artefacts was Thomas Alexander Wise (1802-1889), a physician stationed in India and employed by the East India Company. The McManus (Leisure and Culture Dundee) collection of Tibetan objects reveals Wise's interest in tantric Buddhist rituals and holistic approaches to health and spiritual wellbeing. Another collector of note is Sir William Burrell (1861-1958) whose collection of Chinese ceramics, jades and bronzes was acquired with the wealth he made from shipping. The Burrell Collection is managed by Glasgow Museums. The painter James McNeill Whistler (1834-1903) and the jeweller James Cromar Watt (1862-1940) saw Chinese culture as a source of inspiration for their own artistic practice. Whistler's ceramic collection was donated to The Hunterian (University of Glasgow) by his sister-in-law, Rosalind Birnie Philip. James Cromar Watt bequeathed his collection of cinnabar lacquer, carved precious stones and cloisonné ware to Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums.

A lesser-known collector of Chinese objects who emerged from the survey was Miss Lois Stephen, a female missionary who was active in Chizhou, China in the late 19th-early 20th century. Stephen's collection of textiles and items relating to her missionary work are in the collections at the University of Aberdeen. Also at the University of Aberdeen are Tibetan objects acquired by James R L MacDonald (1862-1927) during the Younghusband Mission to Tibet in 1903-1904. 'Star objects' are the archaic bronzes collected by the honorary curator, Professor Robert Lockhart (1942-1979), using the 'Dr Robert Wilson Trust' fund. Dr Isaac Newton's early ceramics are also a highlight of the Chinese collection at the University of Aberdeen.

Melville Jamieson Gray's (1848-1946) collection includes an exceptional example of ceremonial parade armour. The armour, made to be worn by a high-ranking Qing official, is in the collections at Perth Museum and Art Gallery (Culture Perth and Kinross). Another highlight of the Chinese collections in Scotland is the export silverware at Fife Cultural Trust that was donated by John Galloway in 1926 and Mrs Forbes in 1950. Elgin Museum has the Levack collection of Chinese *famille rose* porcelain, in addition to a very rare cape of a lama priest's robe which was presented by Major M J Brander in 1866. The Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum not only has a wide range of ethnographic materials, it also holds rare materials brought back from the Opium Wars and donated to the museum by Mr J Kirkwood.

The main collector of Japanese artefacts in Scotland was Henry Dyer (1848-1918), an engineer who was hired by the Meiji Government to establish a curriculum for the new Imperial College of Engineering in Tokyo. Dyer's collection of Japanese prints, scroll paintings, painting albums, woodblock-printed books and musical instruments are in the collections at Glasgow Museums, Special Collections at The Mitchell Library (Glasgow Museums and Collections, Glasgow Life), and Edinburgh Central Library (City of Edinburgh Council). Dyer also donated a bronze mirror to The McLean Museum, Greenock (Inverclyde Council) in 1895.

Japanese woodblock print collections can also be found at The McManus (Leisure and Culture Dundee), The Burrell Collection (Glasgow Museums), The Hunterian (University of Glasgow), The McLean Museum and Art Gallery, Greenock (Inverclyde Council), National Galleries of Scotland, Paisley Museum (Renfrewshire Leisure), Perth Museum and Art Gallery (Culture and Perth Kinross), University of Aberdeen, and Dumfries Museum (Dumfries and Galloway Council Arts and Museums Service). The largest collection of woodblock prints in Scotland is at National Museums Scotland and numbers around 4,600 sheets.

Another extraordinary collection in Scotland is the Meiji Government Gift of 1878 that was organised by the first Professor of Civil and Mechanical Engineering at the Imperial University in Tokyo, Robert Henry Smith (1851-1914). The Gift is in the collections at Glasgow Museums and contains Japanese industrial samples and products.

A lesser-known collector of Japanese objects to emerge from the survey is George Rodgers Macdougall (1843-1917) who bequeathed Japanese sword fittings, *netsuke*, and *inrō* to the McLean Museum and Art Gallery (Greenock). Macdougall formed a partnership with Ceasar Czarnikow and transformed Czarnikow's brokerage into one of the largest sugar trading businesses in the world. The profits from this enterprise funded his passion for collecting Japanese artefacts.

James Troup's (1840-1925) collection of Japanese and Chinese objects at the University of Aberdeen was an interesting discovery. Troup served as HBM Consul-General of Yokohama, Japan in June 1888 and as the Consul on the island of Ezo (Hokkaido) in 1894. Troup acquired a few artefacts that related to Ainu culture during this period. The survey highlighted the significance of two other lesser-known donors of Ainu-related objects whose collections are in Scotland: James Main Dixon (1856-1933) and John Henry Dixon (1838-1926). James Main Dixon, who was Professor of English at the Imperial University in Tokyo during the 1880s, left his collection to Paisley Museum (Renfrewshire Leisure). The Ainu textiles at Perth Museum and Art Gallery (Culture Perth and Kinross) were collected by John Henry Dixon and are among the 'star objects' in East Asian collections in Scotland.

The number of Korean objects in collections in Scotland is small. The most notable collection of Korean items to emerge from the study was at Perth Museum and Art Gallery (Culture Perth and Kinross), and comprised garments and accessories from the Melville Jamieson Gray (1848-1946) donation. Three Korean hats were identified in the collections at The McManus (Leisure and Culture Dundee), donor not known.

Authors who emerged from the study as commentators on aspects of East Asian culture and politics were Henry Dyer (1848-1918) (Glasgow Museums, Special Collections at The Mitchell Library - Glasgow Museums and Collections, Glasgow Life, and Edinburgh City Library), Constance Frederica Gordon-Cumming (1837-1924) (Falconer Museum), and Samuel Mossman (fl. 1850-1880) (Hawick Museum, Live Borders Museums, Galleries and Archives). Samuel Mossman authored many books and worked as the second Chief Editor at the *North China Herald*, Shanghai. The most extensive collections of newspapers are at The Stirling Smith Museum and Art Gallery, and Falconer Museum. The Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum's collection draws attention to the life of editor and journalist John Reddie Black (1826-1880), who published newspapers in Japan and China in the late 19th century.

East Asian collections of photography are particularly strong in Scotland. Photographic collections are held at National Galleries of Scotland, University of Edinburgh Library, National Library of Scotland, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and Edinburgh City Library

(City of Edinburgh Council). Rare souvenir fans with photographic images were discovered at Paisley Museum (Renfrewshire Leisure) and Live Life Aberdeenshire Museums. While rare photographic compositions on panes of painted glass are at The McLean Museum and Art Gallery, Greenock (Inverclyde Council).

## Donors that Link Institutions

It is not yet possible to analyse in detail the many ways in which donors have contributed to museum collections in Scotland. Before this can be done well, further time must be invested in provenance research. At the time of writing this report, it has been possible to identify a handful of donors whose East Asian collections have been split between more than one institution. This section identifies donors whose gifts and bequests link collections across museums in Scotland. Further research may identify more.

James Cromar Watt's (1862-1940) collection is mainly found at Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums. However, National Museums Scotland also received items from the James Cromar Watt bequest in 1941. The Department of World Cultures has eight items from China and Tibet, comprising lacquerware and jade ceremonial sceptres (Ch. *ruyi*), in addition to objects from Iran, Greece and Syria that were also collected by Watt.

Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museums has objects from the Captain George Warre (1876-1957) collection, mainly Japanese sword guards (J. *tsuba*). In 1938 National Museums Scotland acquired 38 objects from the Warre collection with assistance from the National Art Collections Fund. The collection is mostly comprised of Chinese ceramics, mainly from the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) and Qing dynasty (1644-1911). Only one item has been identified as Japanese, a 19th-century carved wooden figure of the lucky god, Fukurokuju.

The Falconer Museum has a small collection of objects that once belonged to Miss Constance Frederica Gordon-Cumming (1837-1924). National Museums Scotland's Department of World Cultures has 128 object records for items that were purchased from Gordon-Cumming in 1881, including 13 objects from China and three objects from Japan. The rest of Gordon-Cumming's collection comes from Sri Lanka, Tonga, Fiji and Samoa.

Dr Isaac Newton's (fl. c.1941-1981) collection of Chinese ceramics can be found at both the University of Aberdeen and at National Museums Scotland. The Department of World Cultures has 53 object records relating to the Chinese items that were donated in 1953. The collection has several Han-dynasty (206 BCE- 220 CE) bronze mirrors as well as Han-dynasty and Song-dynasty (960-1279) ceramic wares.

The Miss Isabelle A Tyrie's (1905-1989) bequest of Tibetan items entered the collections at The McManus (Leisure and Culture Dundee) in 1989. National Museums Scotland also acquired 64 Tibetan items from the Tyrie bequest in 1990. These objects are late-19th century and range from jewellery to ritual implements.

Henry Dyer's (1848-1918) collection of Japanese artefacts was donated by his relatives to Edinburgh Central Library (City of Edinburgh Council), Glasgow Museums, and Special Collections at The Mitchell Library (Glasgow Museums and Collections, Glasgow Life). National Museums Scotland has three lacquer boxes and three ceramic vessels that were donated in 1946 by Henry Dyer's daughter, Miss Marie Ferguson Dyer (1882-1958).

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh has George Forrest's (1873-1932) diaries, photographs and financial accounts from his expeditions to south-west China. National Museums Scotland has 15 object records for Chinese objects that Forrest donated to the museum in 1911. These items range from crossbows and swords, possibly purchased for Forrest's expeditions to north-west Yunnan, to decorative objects such as bronze incense burners, porcelain and textiles.

## Conclusion

Owing to the time constraints of this survey, certain collections have received more detailed analysis than others. It is hoped that this report will provide a starting point for more thorough research and act as a guide for curators, collection management teams and researchers wishing to develop their understanding of Chinese, Japanese and Korean artefacts in Scottish collections. There are extraordinary examples of ancient Chinese bronzes and ceramics, Tibetan ritual artefacts, Korean dress, Ainu materials, and Japanese arms and armour to be found across Scotland.

The collections reveal the role that Scotland's maritime trade, military expeditions and Christian missions have played in shaping perceptions of East Asia. The objects that were collected at source, or purchased via dealers in decorative arts and antiquities, enable contemporary museum visitors to appreciate how cultures and aesthetics from other parts of the globe have influenced and transformed our economy and society. Curators are encouraged to use their East Asian collections to inspire their audiences, stimulate discussion, and challenge Eurocentric perceptions of world history.

Recently, several local museums have received funding to upgrade their storage facilities, redisplay their collections and enhance their object records. These positive developments, combined with the work of dedicated museum staff and volunteers, mean that our shared cultural heritage will be safeguarded for future generations to enjoy. It is clear from this review that certain materials need greater conservation and care, and it is hoped that the enhanced documentation that has resulted from this project will strengthen applications for funding. Textile conservation appears to be a priority for many of the museums surveyed in this review. A small number of museums have objects that require specialist paper conservation or hold artefacts, such as lacquered furniture, that require close monitoring. Clearly, more resources need to be invested in conservation care and the training of future conservators.

Within Scottish museums and archives there are fascinating collections with the potential to deepen public understanding of Britain's past conflicts and mercantile activity in East Asia. The recurrence of certain types of objects across local museums should be viewed in a positive light as, collectively, Scotland has an archive of materials that demonstrates subtle variation and contrast across a range of disciplines. Based on the evidence summarised in this review, there is great potential for museums to work collaboratively when formulating exciting displays foregrounding East Asia's rich material culture.

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