

# Forming the Japanese Modern Craft Movement: Perspectives from the Leach Archives

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Modernization in Japan profoundly changed ideas about the making of crafts by hand. From the 1910s, a select number of producers, based chiefly in Tokyo, began to focus upon the role of the individual maker, the meaning of tradition, and the relationship of craft to everyday life. A burgeoning mass media began to valorize makers and products. A central figure on that stage was the British ceramicist Bernard Leach (1887–1979). Until quite recently the stories told about Bernard Leach were by Leach, his friends or disciples. This is a well-honed biography, and its outlines were already in place in Japan by the 1930s. However in the past two decades scholars have exposed the tensions and contradictions in this orthodox Leach portrait, especially in the context of Yanagi Soetsu and the Mingei (Folk Craft) movement.<sup>1)</sup> This essay, while indebted to both the standard biographical and newer critical literature, does not intend to re-visit those approaches. Rather, by focusing chiefly on primary sources, we intend to examine the formative stage for Leach's move into ceramics. Here, our documentary research is enhanced with the publication of the online Bernard Leach Catalogue at the Crafts Centre in Farnham, Surrey, U.K. This massive

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1) Brian Moeran, Bernard Leach and the Japanese Folk Craft Movement: The Formative Years." *Journal of Design History* 2: 2-3 (1989), pp.139-143; Kikuchi Yuko, "The Myth of Yanagi's Individuality: The Formation of Mingei Theory in its Social and Historical Context," *Journal of Design History* 7-4 (1994), pp.246-266; Ajioka Chiaki, "Early Mingei and the Development of Japanese Crafts, 1920s-1940s," PhD dissertation, Australia National University, 1995; Edmund de Waal, *Bernard Leach*, St. Ives Series, Tate Gallery (London, 1998), Suzuki Sadahiro, *Baanaado Riichi no shogai to geijutsu — Higashi to nishi no kekkon* (Bernard Leach's Life and Work—The Marriage of East and West) (Kyoto, 2006); Tsuchida Maki, *Samayoeru kogei — Yanagi Soetsu to kindai* (Wandering Craft—Yanagi Soetsu and Modernity) (Urayasu, 2007).

database contains descriptions, some of them quite detailed, of some 15,000 documents and objects. Many documents and objects are viewable as digital images. Here we will refer to this data as the “Leach archive” or simply “archive”.<sup>2)</sup> When considered in light of Leach’s artistic and cultural activities in Tokyo, these materials will shed new light on the modern craft movement in Japan.

### Access to the Center

Bernard Leach arrived in Tokyo in April 1909 together with an etching press and an intention to teach graphic art. Although his primary artistic milieu in Japan is commonly identified as the Shirakaba literary circle, Leach was initially indebted to the faculty and students of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts (TSFA) in Ueno, present-day Taito ward, Tokyo. The connection, as is well known, came through artist Takamura Kotaro (1882–1956), who introduced Leach to his father, the sculptor Koun (1852–1934), and Iwamura Toru (1870–1917), both powerful faculty members of the school. A letter in the Leach archive also shows that in 1909 Kotaro proposed introducing Leach to painter Ishii Hakutei (1882–1958) and Kawasaki Yasu (dates unknown), editor of *Nihon bijutsu zasshi*.<sup>3)</sup> With this backing, Leach could find a translator and companion in Iwamura’s assistant Morita Kamenosuke (1883–1966), who later helped Leach build a house and studio at 40 Sakuragi-cho, presently Sakuragi-cho 2-chome, just behind the present National University of Fine Arts. Within the year Leach was featured in at least two newspaper columns, was invited to write for the cutting-edge magazines *Shumi* and *Hosun*, and was the subject of a two-page interview in *Bijutsu shinpo* (fig. 1). He was invited to lecture at TSFA. This is by any

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2) References to “diaries” in this article pertain to Leach’s 1911–1912 diary, archive no. 10875, and his 1913 diary, archive no. 10876. The archive number of all other materials will be listed in brackets [] in the footnotes.

3) A copy of a letter by Kotaro in the Leach archives [14320]. The catalogue lists the date as February 14, 1907 but the year must be a misreading of 1909. Later accounts mention that Kotaro provided six letters for Leach, addressed to Iwamura, Koun, Hakutei, Kasawaki, Masaki Naohiko (1862–1940), and Kotaro’s lifelong friend, the poet Mizuno Yoshu (1883–1947); see Suzuki, op. cit., p.22.



fig. 1 Leach in his new studio, Sakurakgi-cho, Ueno, 1909. From *Bijutsu shinpo* 8-14 (1909).

measure an accelerated track for a young and unknown artist, and it is noteworthy that Leach's startup activities included writing, one element that would separate modern craft makers from their predecessors. Leach's good fortune may be effectively contrasted with the travails of Japanese artist Makino Yoshio (1868-1956), who tried to establish a career in London at roughly the same time. Lacking connections, Makino struggled for years, surviving through activities like modeling in kimono for orientalist painters or designing tombstones until his eventual success.<sup>4)</sup>

Kotaro's introductions brought Leach to the center of the avant-garde movement in Japan, one that was re-defining the objectives and boundaries of fine art. Hakubakai, the painting faction representing TSFA faculty and students, began to break out of the exclusive fine-arts concept in 1901, when it introduced French lithograph posters and encouraged the spread of art nouveau in Japan. Iwamura Toru, who had joined the TSFA faculty in 1899, was a progressive thinker and world traveler. Already in the opening years of the century he was a key figure in Tokyo's literary salons, and upon his return from Europe in 1909 he introduced his Japanese contemporaries to the ideas of British craft reformer William Morris. As Ajioka Chiaki has

4) See Makino (Markino), *A Japanese Artist in London* (Philadelphia, 1910).

pointed out, in addition to a distinguished faculty, the TSFA design curriculum encouraged training by different teachers, and its setting in an art school with multiple disciplines produced an artistic climate in which the producers developed an individual outlook rather than allegiance to a specific medium. Many painters, either out of interest or necessity, were branching into allied fields such as printmaking, poster designs, and book illustration. Students working in craft design were taught to consider decoration as part of the whole object rather than the making of preliminary sketches. TSFA painting teacher Okada Saburosuke (1869–1939) started the Gorakukai movement that advocated the creation of objects for personal pleasure that in turn would serve as models for society. Kotaro's younger brother Toyochika (1890–1972), who Leach met in his initial audience at the Takamura residence, enrolled at the school to study metal casting. Inspired by design and craft innovators like Tsuda Shinobu (1875–1946) and Akatsuka Jitoku (1871–1936), Toyochika would emerge as a leader in the new craft movement in the 1920s. TSFA students were major contributors to Rokando, the multimedia gallery opened by Kotaro in 1910.<sup>5)</sup> And most importantly, Tomimoto Kenkichi (18–19), a TSFA graduate possessed with the most advanced understanding of European craft reform and design, returned from his sojourn to England and met Leach in mid-1910.

After an unhappy year in which Leach's submissions to the annual Monbusho art exhibition (Bunten) were apparently rejected, his fortunes improved.<sup>6)</sup> His diary notes that on January 30th, 1911, he sketched pottery at the [Ueno] museum, with the prophetic thought, "Why should a porcelain vase not be as beautiful as a picture?" On the 18th of the next month, the diary tells of attending a party with Tomimoto and Morita hosted "by the artist Hiraoka." On the page opposite the reference is a quick sketch of a raku kiln. This was the party where Leach tried his hand at decorating Raku ware, which led to his infatuation with ceramics. "The artist Hiraoka" was

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5) Ajioka Chiaki, "When Craft Became Art: Modern Japanese Art and the Mingei Sakka," *Nihon no dento kogeï saiko — soto kara mita kogeï no shorai to sono kanosei* (Kyoto, 2005), pp.213–216. Incidentally, Leach himself participated in an exhibition of artist-painted fans at Rokando in November of 1911. See *Bijutsu shinpo* 10–10 (1911), p.32.

6) Takamura consoles Leach about this rejection in a letter of October 1910 [11572].

surely Kuroda Seiki's student and Hakubakai painter Hiraoka Gonpachirō (1883–1943), adopted heir to the Shinbashi restaurant Kagetsuro and, together with Matsuyama Shozo (1884–1970), the founder of the first Japanese café, Printemps (Kafue Purantan), which would open just a month after the party. A flagship of Tokyo's nascent café society, Printemps was funded by 50-sen monthly contributions from fellow artists, and one might speculate that this gathering was part of the planning. The sponsor for the party, Gahosha, was the publisher of *Bijutsu shinpo* and many books on art, including Iwamura's. Leach later visited Printemps several times, mentioning Hiraoka and Matsuyama and calling it "not a bad little place at all."<sup>7)</sup>

Four days after this party Leach's diary mentions an "exhibition planned for April" and "I want to experiment with crockery too." The exhibition was to be the ground-breaking Bijutsu shinpo-sponsored Saishu sakka shohin ten (Group exhibition of "small" artworks), held at the Gorakuden, an exhibition space in Kyobashi, a fashionable urban area adjacent to Ginza. Noting the actual event, Leach records that Iwamura provided a "high tea" for the 30 exhibitors. Tomimoto exhibited his own prints, watercolors and ceramics alongside Leach, who writes of selling "10 raku pots, 7 etchings and 2 oil-paintings on paper." Together the two arranged the gallery that included chairs designed by Tomimoto and stenciled cloth by Leach. A commemorative photo published in *Bijutsu shinpo* shows Leach and Tomimoto together with Morita and Sakai Gisaburo (also Saisui, 1871–1940), a critic who edited the magazine and wrote for *Chuo bijutsu* and *Bi no kuni*. Leach began to gain a reputation and influence others, including a young and impressionable visitor to this show, potter Kawai Kanjiro (1880–1966).

From this point Leach gradually passed into the custody of Shirakaba. Of course TSFA and Shirakaba personnel cannot be completely separated, but the latter's handling of Leach is distinctive, reflecting Shirakaba's emphasis on the artistic persona over art itself. The group's representations of Rodin are a good example: for Shirakaba, Rodin was an unimpeachable

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7) Diary reference, May 26, 1911.

personality living sincerely unto his art: more than his work as a sculptor, Rodin was a model for character fulfillment.<sup>8)</sup> Shirakaba's appeal depended on the creation of these cult figures. Leach was another such a living model, not so much for the members of the group itself but as a malleable icon for the group's public image. And thus it is not surprising to see an acceleration of Leach's activities with the Shirakaba starting in November 1911, when he wrote an article for the group's magazine and showed four etchings at the Shirakaba-backed Yoga tenrankai (Western-style painting exhibition) at the Sankaido, a popular exhibition space for artists affiliated with various avant-garde groups. Three months later, Leach was exhibiting with the Shirakaba/Sankaido again, in the Shirakaba shusai dai yonkai bijutsu tenrankai (Fourth Shirakaba-sponsored art show), a venue that included Rodin, Renoir, British portraitist Augustus John (1878-1961), Jugendstil artist Heinrich Vogeler (1872-1942) and Shirakaba painter Yamawaki Nobunori (1886-1962). Leach exhibited etchings and drawings along with pottery and toys. In 1913, Leach illustrated all the covers for Shirakaba. In the course of these activities Leach drew closer to Shirakaba's art editor, Yanagi Soetsu, although Leach's diary suggests that the two were not particularly close before 1912.<sup>9)</sup>

In addition to producing and exhibiting, Leach was also becoming familiar with traditional Japanese arts. This was part of his original impulse to visit Japan, to follow the precedent of Lafcadio Hearn in searching for the "strange and beautiful."<sup>10)</sup> In January 23, 1911, Leach's diary mentions that he had decided to "study flower arranging with Nagahara." It is unclear whether or not Leach was referring to painter Nagahara Kotaro (1864-1930), who seems to have been fond of Leach and appears in his diaries as a source on traditional Japanese life. On April 19 Leach writes that he attended a noh drama and, in that connection, three letters in the archive from Shirakaba

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8) See Mushanokoji Saneatsu, "Lodan to Jinsei (Rodin and Life)," *Shirakaba* (November 1910), p.73.

9) In his diary record about the now-famous visit to Yanagi's house to see the Rodin sculptures (December 25, 1911), Leach simply writes "Then we went to the house of a member of the Shirakaba..." Clearly he and Yanagi were not yet on intimate terms. The oldest letter from Yanagi in archive is dated May 1912 [11595].

10) As written in Leach's *A Review, 1909-1914*, privately published, 1914.

poet and noh enthusiast Kinoshita Rigen (1886–1921) are of interest. All of them mention noh, and one of them appears to suggest a noh teacher for Leach.<sup>11)</sup> A group of documents in the archive demonstrates that between 1913 and 1915 Leach compiled materials on the tea ceremony and assembled 51 pieces of tea ceremony ware that were shipped to his uncle, William Evans Hoyle (1855–1926), director of the National Museum of Wales.<sup>12)</sup> Leach even provided diagrams of the proper placement of the utensils to guide the museum display.

### **Outlets: Overseas Sales, Department Stores, Galleries**

The experimental activities of the art school and Shirakaba circles did not guarantee steady income. Leach had to make a living, and the records show that he engaged in a wide variety of activities. Leach had come to Japan with a £140–200 annual income (at that time a single pound sterling was worth about 10 yen) inherited from his late father but that did not ease his anxieties about supporting a family or making a reputation. Leach took a part-time job teaching English and his diaries mention what he read to his students. His early prices for etchings were ambitious: the October 1909 article in *Bijutsu shinpo* introducing Leach mentions that etchings were priced 10 to 70 yen, and the anonymous writer, apparently taken aback at the high end, suggested a price of 10 yen might garner interest among Leach's peers (at that time small paintings by Japan's premier oil painter Kuroda Seiki (1866–1924), were priced at 60 yen). The back cover of *Hosun* 4–7, October 1910 has Leach advertising oil pigments for sale at his Sakuragicho house. On January 16, 1911, his diary mentions packing off etchings for the Chenil Gallery, a Chelsea venue that sold works of his classmates from the Slade School of Art. Diary references and letters show that Leach

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11) Two 1920-dated letters from Rigen [2336–2337] and an undated one suggesting a noh teacher [6575]. Also, a 1915 letter to Leach from Yanagi refers to Rigen and Leach having attended a noh play together [11609].

12) [2291–2296]. These utensils languished in the storage of the Museum until 2001, when they were understood through studies of the Leach archival material and put on display.

endeavored to sell his etchings in the U.S. and Europe throughout this decade.

In March or April of 1911 Leach was demonstrating pottery decoration in Ueno Park, writing the buyer's name in English on souvenir vases and saké cups.<sup>13)</sup> In May 1912 his diary reveals a plan to open an antique shop in Chelsea that would also offer wares made by him and Tomimoto. An undated list, thought to be from the same time, inventories "Owari blue and white" sent to England on his behalf, with prices attached. A letter from Marie Riefstahl dated August 29, 1912, indicates an interest in Leach providing antiques to her newly opened gallery in Paris.<sup>14)</sup> In December 1912, presumably after shopping at the Takushoku colonial exhibition in Ueno, Leach listed up a shipment of antiques, mostly Korean ceramics, intended for Riefstahl. Leach would continue to supply various galleries with antiques throughout his years in Tokyo. On February 29, 1913 his diary mentions that he had arranged a "permanent exhibition" of his own work at Taibunsha. This well-known shop, located in Kanda Jinbocho, sold foreign books, painting, and in the case of Leach, crafts as well. Another notation at the end of his 1913 diary states "early English pattern pots; to be copied by Rokubei of Kyoto; samples sent to me." It appears that Leach was sub-contracting to the prominent Kyoto potter Kiyomizu Rokubei (probably the fifth-generation Rokubei, 1871-1959).

Leach's well-documented relationship with the department store Mitsukoshi (at that time called Mitsukoshi Gofukuten) developed early in his career. Although its earliest home furnishings centered on expensive imports, from the 1910s Mitsukoshi was pioneering in interior merchandise

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13) Emmanuel Cooper, *Bernard Leach: Life and Work* (New Haven and London, 2003), p.76. The date is an estimation based on Leach's work with Horikawa Kozan (see the section on Kozan in this essay).

14) Letter from Marie Riefstahl to Leach [11593]. The Manchester-born artist Marie Reifstahl Nordlinger (1876-1961) was a close friend of writer Marcel Proust and an enamellist and agent for Paris-based art dealer Sigfried Bing. Leach must have known her in London, for already in 1908 he had offered to introduce her to a Paris-bound Takamura Kotaro [11568]. It is possible that Leach first met Reifstahl though his etching teacher Frank Brangwyn, who had collaborated with Bing. Later material in the archive shows that Leach and Riefstahl maintained their friendship over the years.

for mass consumption. These goods were promoted through exhibitions and model displays. Inexpensive paintings and decorative objects – sometimes described as *shohin* (small works) or *jitsyuhin* (functional works) rather than *bijutsuhin* (art works) – were part of this campaign. Realizing that few people could actually display large paintings in their small homes, from May 1912 the store had its first Yoga *shohin tenrankai* (Show of small western-style painting) with prices ranging from 60 yen for a painting by Kuroda Seiki to three yen for a miniature. This serves as the background for Leach's participation in *Gendai taika sho-geijutsuhin tenrankai* (Show of small artworks by great contemporary artists) at Mitsukoshi in March 1913 and October 1914.<sup>15</sup> Leach's diary includes the prices for the first show ("List of pottery for Mitsukoshi"): porcelain pot, 5 yen; various *yunomi* (cylindrical tea cups), from 1 yen to 1.50 yen; *chanoyu chawan* (tea-ceremony bowls), 7.50 yen; various small *chawan*, 50 to 60 sen; hat pins: 50 sen; pair of *oshidori* (mandarin ducks), 50 sen; porcelain toy dogs: 25 sen; and flower vase: 4–5 yen. Almost all of these were marked "sold" (fig. 2). Leach continued to exhibit at Mitsukoshi, not only in the Tokyo main store but probably in the

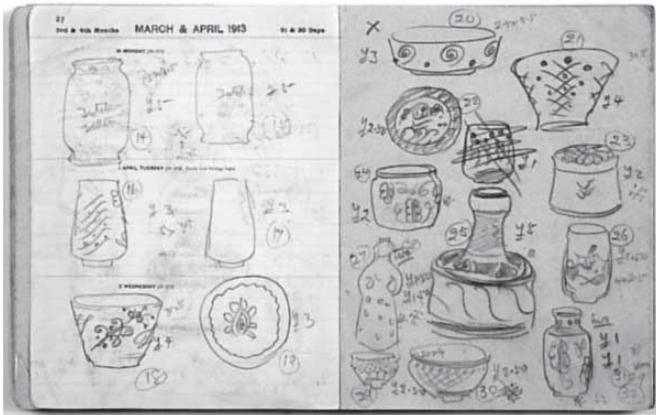


fig. 2 Bernard Leach. Sketches of ceramics submitted to the Small Artworks Exhibition at Mitsukoshi, Tokyo, 1913. Diary entry, pencil, 25.5 x 41 cm. Copyright John Leach/Crafts Study Centre.

15) The 1913 show data is mentioned in the 1913 diary, entry of February 7.

Osaka branch as well.<sup>16)</sup> By the time of his second visit to Japan in the 1930s Leach was not only showing his own work at Mitsukoshi, but together with Yanagi, Hamada Shoji and Kawai he was purchasing tens of thousands of crafts countrywide for the store.<sup>17)</sup> Leach's Mitsukoshi connection demonstrates that modern craft was developed not only by individual makers and galleries, but due also to parallel trends in consumption, by the retail sector.

On what basis did Leach's early pottery appeal to these urban audiences? Remaining works and photographs suggest that in the early years Leach was inspired by Majolica or Delft earthenware and late Ming blue-and white-porcelain (fig. 3). Those models also informed the works of potters throughout Japan, ranging from the Kyoto Ceramics Testing Institute staff to individual potter Itaya Hazan (1872–1963). For the small group of art-world colleagues that patronized Leach's early shows, an added appeal came from the application of painting to crafts. Professional crafts decoration had reached a crisis point in 1900, when the earlier concept of



fig. 3 Bernard Leach. Left: sketch of a Delft albarelo, 1912. Pencil, size unknown. Right: Delft-style vase, 1911~1920. Raku ware, 10.0 x 8.5 cm. Copyright John Leach/Crafts Study Centre.

16) Mention of "Osaka Mitsukoshi" in the 1913 diary, entry of September 13.

17) Cooper, op cit, p.190.

“japanesque” applied design was deemed inferior to new European ideas such as Art Nouveau. In Japan, painters consequently came to be seen as potential saviors for the crafts: they could bring freshness and sensitivity to a stagnant field. Leach’s early ceramic decorations lacked the virtuosity of his professional counterparts, but that very absence may have held promise for a new direction in crafts. It is noteworthy that Leach’s first raku ware was described as “Riichi-kun no jiga no rakuyaki” (Raku ware with Leach’s own painting). On the other hand, for customers at the Mitsukoshi, unfamiliar with such nuances, Leach’s work presented a chance to buy something both affordable (small items at Mitsukoshi were priced at 50 sen) and, more importantly, exotic. A list of “things to make” made in his diary on September 18, 1913, includes, in addition to items familiar to a Japanese audience, “foreign items” like paperweights, knife rests, pencil holders, marbles, toys, hat pins, salt cellars (dishes for holding salt), ink stamps, clock stands, tea and coffee sets, and mugs. This “occidental” appeal helps us to understand why, after Leach moved back to England, Yanagi Soetsu implored him to send English-style earthenware rather than stoneware, and coffee sets rather than bowls for the tea ceremony for sale back in Tokyo.

Leach also displayed at private galleries, which were just beginning to open in Tokyo. His etchings, paintings, and ceramics were variously exhibited at Rokando (Japan’s first private art gallery, where Leach exhibited in 1910), Venus Kurabu (1913), Mikasa (1914), Bijutsuten Tanakaya (1914), and Ryuitsu-so (Rousseau; 1917). Some of those contacts emerge in Leach’s letters and diaries. One is dealer and art historian Tanaka Kisaku (1885–1945), who in October 1914 featured Leach in his new gallery in Takegawa-cho, Kyobashi. Tanaka appears among the well-wishers in a farewell photograph with Leach on the eve of his departure to China in 1915. Letters in the archive show that Tanaka worked together with Yanagi to exhibit Leach’s pottery after the latter’s return to England in 1920.<sup>18)</sup> In a May 5, 1923 essay in the *Yomiuri* newspaper, Tanaka writes that in addition to Ryuitsu-so gallery proprietor Naka Seigo, Nojima Hiromasa and Hasegawa Denjiro were helping with a Leach exhibition. Nojima (1889–1944) and Hasegawa

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18) [2379], a letter of September 14, 1922; [2348], a letter written sometime after 1920.

(1894–1976) are two of Japan’s prominent prewar photographers. Nojima’s support for the Leach show is corroborated in a letter from Yanagi in 1925.<sup>19)</sup> Leach’s diary of 1923 lists a “Hasegawa” as a correspondent.<sup>20)</sup>

Naka Seigo (1878–1969) became especially prominent after Leach’s move back to Tokyo in 1919.<sup>21)</sup> Naka was the mediator in Kuroda Seiki’s offer to sponsor a new kiln in Azabu for Leach after his Abiko workshop burned down in 1919. Leach and Naka appear together in Kuroda’s diary at the time of the Azabu kiln opening, and photographs in the Leach archive record the event.<sup>22)</sup> Although several letters written in 1922 by Yanagi to Leach in England show some dissatisfaction with Naka, by 1923, all had been resolved.<sup>23)</sup> Naka’s gallery was destroyed in the 1923 earthquake, and after that Leach’s *in absentia* shows were held at the Kyukyodo Gallery, sometimes with Naka present. Naka also used the kiln left at Kuroda’s estate.<sup>24)</sup>

## Tokyo Ceramics

Leach could not become a pioneering artist-craftsman without access to technical expertise. His first mentor was a neighbor in Sakuragi-cho, Horikawa Kozan (active about 1890–1930), who also managed a ceramics display at the 1911 Tokyo Kangyo Hakurankai at Ikenohata, Ueno. Leach’s diary has numerous references to “baking pottery” at that venue between March and May 1911.<sup>25)</sup> The *Yomiuri shinbun* reveals Horikawa’s background, none of it mentioned in Leach’s writings. Horikawa appears first in 1898,

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19) See [11633]. Kishida Ryusei’s diary mentions that Nojima offered his house in Koishikawa for an exhibition by Kishida in 1922 (Nojima was the son of a wealthy banker, which helps to explain such largesse).

20) [10884]

21) For a full account of Naka Seigo, see Yokosuka Yukie, “Ryuitsu-so to Naka Seigo” (Naka Seigo and the Ryuitsu-so), *Taisho imajurii* 3 (2007), pp.86–87.

22) *Kuroda Seiki nikki*, 1919.10.23; 1919.10.24

23) [11626, 11628, 11629, 11631]

24) Naka Seigo to Leach, letter of July 29, 1921 [2370].

25) For example, March 26, April 1, April 2, April 19 (with Tomimoto), April 24, April 27, May 15, May 20, May 21, May 25.

aspiring to become a ceramic decorator in the mold of Ninsei and Kenzan, even taking painting lessons from Sakai Hoitsu's descendent Sakai Doitsu (1845-1913) in order to achieve it. Three years later, Kozan exhibited a polychrome vase at the first Yogyohin kyoshinkai (Promotional exhibit for the ceramic industry) with other participants listed as Chin Jukan and Kato "Tomojiro" (perhaps a corruption of Kato Tomotaro, 1851-1916). In December of that year, Horikawa opened an exhibit of 3000 of his own wares in Negishi. Then, in 1906, the newspaper mentions that potter Horikawa had decorated the ceiling of Mitsui Hachiroemon's house in Azabu (which is now part of the Edo Tokyo Tatemono-en in Koganei).<sup>26)</sup> The collection of the Tokyo University of Fine Arts includes a vase submitted by Kozan to the Fifth Domestic Industrial Exposition, held in 1903.

But the most intriguing aspect of Horikawa's reputation comes from a foreign source. According to the August 1910 edition of a British periodical, *Building News and Engineering Journal*, Horikawa was one of the most popular craftsman participating in the Japan-British exhibition of that year. He demonstrated Japanese-style pottery making and repaired "priceless antiquities".<sup>27)</sup> A 1914 article written by Horikawa for the *Kenchiku kogei soshi* mentions that while in London demonstrating raku-ware techniques such as extracting red-hot pots from the kiln and quenching them in water, Horikawa got a chance to learn technology for decorative bricks, and upon his return opened a workshop in Mukojima.<sup>28)</sup> The same year, Horikawa participated in the first Kokusan shorei no tenrankai (Domestic products promotion exhibition) at Ikenohata. He demonstrated Raku ware amidst displays of western cooking, sushi making, and sewing machines.<sup>29)</sup>

The Tokyo Kangyo Hakurankai closed on June 10, 1911. This must have finished Leach's chances for working under Horikawa, for just two days

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26) *Yomiuri shinbun*, 1898.01.07, 1901.9.13, 1901.12.29, 1906.12.20, respectively.

27) As mentioned in Hotta-Lister, Ayako, *The Japan-British Exhibition of 1910: gateway to the island empire of the East* (Richmond, Surrey, 1999).

28) Horikawa Kozan, "Decorative bricks and their demand", *Kenchiku kogei soshi* 2-20 (Dec. 1914). I don't know when Horikawa died but he was still active as of 1922, when the Nov. 11 issue of the *Yomiuri shinbun* mentions his making an image for the commemoration of the Meiji Emperor.

29) *Yomiuri shinbun*, 1914.11.15.

later, we see in Leach's diary: "He [Morita Kamenosuke] called after lunch and we went to see Mr. Itaya [Hazan] at Tabata. He has many charming examples of old porcelain. He was not willing that I should study with him."<sup>30)</sup> This meeting of Leach and Itaya Hazan is not mentioned in other early writings, although the two seem have met again in 1934. In his own biography Hamada Shoji remarked that Hazan was not disposed toward taking students, so his rejection of Leach is understandable. As for Horikawa, he appears one more time in Leach's records, in spring of 1912, in an unpublished draft for a critical essay on art: "a porcelain maker [Horikawa] who lives just across the way is an example [of a debased modern style]. He is the lineal successor of a famous ceramicist. He is now about 45. He works for position and money. He has 'push'. He went with the workmen to the Anglo-Japanese exhibition with a fair conceit of himself and is now unbearable. He hardly retains any of the old excellence in his products. He substitutes gas for coal, and coal for pinewood in his kilns. His work is very clean, highly finished (so called), but without quality. He has undoubtedly no understanding of what we mean by taste and yet he and men like him in all departments are the people who are judging people's taste..."<sup>31)</sup> Horikawa had become demonized, and was never to appear in Leach's public writing. Strictly speaking, Horikawa and not Leach was the first potter to use and demonstrate Japanese techniques in the west, an uncomfortable fact that Leach may have wanted to forget about.

Over the weeks following the rejection from Itaya Hazan, there are no further diary mentions of pottery baking. Instead Leach studied stencil dyeing with a "Mr. Adachi" and practiced photography. After returning from a summer in Hakone, through the introduction of either Ishii Hakutei or Awashima Kangetsu, Leach was introduced to Urano Shigekichi (1851–1923), who claimed descent from the great Kyoto potter Ogata Kenzan (1663–1743).<sup>32)</sup> Leach described Urano as "old, kindly and poor, pushed to

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30) 1911 diary (June 12), archive no. 10875.

31) 1911 diary (insert written in Spring 1912), no. 10875.

32) Various dates have been given for the beginning of Leach's study with Urano, but considering the sequence of events in Leach's diary it must have taken place in autumn 1911.

one side by the new commercialism of the Meiji era.” Apparently Kenya was surviving by selling dishes to the Hyakkaen garden-park in Mukojima and ceramic beads to Mitsukoshi Gofukuten. Urano, living in nearby Iriya, taught Leach how to use the pottery wheel and passed on knowledge of pigments and glazes, especially for the low-temperature raku-ware style. He helped Leach build his first kiln at Sakuragi-cho — the 1913 diary clearly shows that this took place between January and February of that year — and later at Abiko. Moreover, he gave Leach a certificate of proficiency, or *densho*, which has been interpreted to signify Leach’s inheritance of the Kenzan title. Although the idea of the Kenzan tradition had little meaning for Leach in his early period, it took on increasing significance in the postwar period, culminating in his book *Kenzan and His Tradition* (1967).

From a historical point of view, Urano may be linked to a long tradition of Tokyo earthenware potters based along the lower reaches of the Sumida River, working in unglazed and glazed earthenware such as Imado ware, Sumidagawa ware, and the Mukojima workshop of Urano’s teacher, Miura Kenya (1821–89). However Kenya was not only a potter, rather he was passionately interested in Western technology, designing Japan’s first ironclad ship and developing factories to make brick, glass and ceramic insulators. Nor was Urano Shigekichi a completely “traditional” potter. He worked for the German chemist and technical advisor Gottfried Wagener (1831–92), and his father-in-law was pioneering Japanese photographer and Europhile Shimooka Renjo (1823–1914). Urano had submitted a craft work with decoration of wind and thunder gods to the Paris International Exposition in 1900 and received a certificate of merit for it. He also wrote for various craft-related journals such as *Kenchiku kogei soshi* and *Shoga kotto zasshi*.<sup>33)</sup> Urano may have been poor, but like Horikawa he was open to experiment and could discourse with persons outside traditional pottery networks. For Leach, the chance to learn Horikawa and Urano’s “enyukai” style of raku-ware was providential. This technique bridged the arts of

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33) Rokusei Ogata Kenzan, “Kenzan Shinsei no sakuhiin” (The work of Kenzan Shinsei), *Kenchiku kogei soshi* 2–13 (1914); Rokusei Ogata Kenzan, “Ogata Kenzan oyobi sono kakei ni tsuite” (Ogata Kenzan and his family genealogy), *Shoga kotto zasshi* 87 (1915).

painting and pottery. Also, the lead glazes and low-temperature kiln technology were simple enough that an amateur could handle all the stages of production alone. These are key characteristics in Leach's break from traditional workshop practice.

### Tokyo Away From Tokyo

For Leach, Tokyo extended to the resort areas of Hakone and Karuizawa, and eventually to Abiko. Leach stayed in Karuizawa in the summers of 1914, 1917, and 1918. While developed initially for foreign residents, by the time of Leach's first visit it was very popular with Japanese as well, and by 1918 half of its summer residents were Japanese. There, through Shirakaba member Arishima Takeo (1878-1923), Leach made the acquaintance of Arishima's brother-in-law Yamamoto Naoyoshi (1870-1945), the founder of the Mikasa hotel. In order to produce souvenir gifts for his guests, Naoyoshi had approached Yokohama potter Makuzu Kozan (1842-1916; name written differently than the aforementioned Horikawa Kozan), resulting in the establishment of the Mikasa kiln in 1905. Apprentices Mori Koshu (1855-1921) and Itaka Kizan (1881-1887) managed the kiln with oversight from Kozan, and the latter took over the kiln completely in 1921. However Kozan was a frequent visitor, and Leach seems to have met him and made some pottery at the Karuizawa.<sup>34</sup> Leach may have had prior knowledge about Kozan from his etching teacher, Frank Brangwyn, or seen Kozan's work in one of the expositions at Ueno or in art magazines such as *Bijutsu shinpo*.

A diary entry for January 14, 1914, mentions that Leach was at 1837 Minami Ota Machi, "staying in his little house in Yokohama, commencing pottery study with Makuzu Kozan." Thus after the summer encounter Leach must have decided to study with Kozan in earnest. The intention must have been to learn something of Kozan's world-celebrated porcelain techniques, but the relationship seems to have foundered, possibly due to Kozan's secrecy. It is interesting that, despite his stated antipathy to

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34) The Leach-Karuizawa-Kozan connection is narrated in Shikiba 609.

academism, Leach sought to study with Makuzu Kozan and Itaya Hazan, the two contemporary potters closest to representing an “academy style” in ceramics — indeed the two were among the few receiving the official title of Teikoku Gigeiin, or Imperial Craftsman.

Leach’s second resort pottery experience was far more fruitful. Yanagi Soetsu had moved to Abiko, Chiba prefecture, in 1914, and a letter in the archives from September of that year offers a poetic view of the new location.<sup>35)</sup> To lure Leach back from China, where he had moved in 1915, Yanagi offered Leach use of his land; in October 16 the former was writing, “Your room in Abiko is now ready and any land for building *kama* [kiln].”<sup>36)</sup> Unfortunately Leach’s documents from this period were lost in a fire in 1919, but enough survives to suggest that at Abiko, Leach’s notion of a new kind of potter assumed its distinctive form. Components included the establishment of a “universal standard” that crossed the borders of “East and West”; the insistence on primal inspiration rather than technical merit, and the importance of working in a rural environment. Leach was also working “alone”: the individual potter, like his contemporaries in the new woodblock print movement called *sosaku hanga*, could take physical responsibility for the entire process of manufacture. These ideas continue to influence craft producers and consumers a century later.

### Another Network

Several of Leach’s biographers have made the point that Leach inhabited two worlds in the years 1909–1920, one the comfortable Tokyo community of foreign merchants and missionaries to which his grandparents had belonged, and the other being the art world. But the archive material suggests that these cannot be so easily divided, and that a number of Leach’s foreign friends in Tokyo were international players in art and culture. One is editor and writer J.W. Robertson-Scott (1866–1962). Leach knew Robertson-Scott as early as 1911, and seems to have introduced him to Yanagi sometime

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35) [1604]

36) [11618]

before June 1915.<sup>37)</sup> When Robertson-Scott became the editor of the *New East*, a bilingual wartime propaganda magazine sponsored by the British government, he invited both Yanagi and Leach to write for it. Yanagi's life in Abiko is also featured in Robertson-Scott's 1922 book *The Foundations of Japan*. The glowing description of Yanagi in the eleventh chapter — the author calls him a “priest without priestcraft, a priest living joyously in the world” — reminds us of Leach's praises of his friend.<sup>38)</sup> Yet a letter to Leach in 1916 Yanagi complains about Robertson-Scott's ignorance of the new Japan as portrayed another of his books, *The Ignoble Warrior*.<sup>39)</sup>

Robertson-Scott's wife Elspet was a writer, and her sister was the artist Elizabeth Keith (1887–1956), who became infatuated with Japanese art while visiting Elspet in Tokyo in 1915. Yanagi seems to have introduced the two sisters to Korea. Yanagi provided notes for Elspet Scott's book *Old Korea, The Land of Morning Calm* (1946) illustrated by Elizabeth. Elizabeth Keith also became a well-known artist in Japan, and, with influence from another visiting printmaker, the Austrian Fritz Capelari (1884–1940), came to design woodblock prints in collaboration with the well-known Ginza print entrepreneur Watanabe Shozaburo (1885–1962), leader of the Shin-Hanga movement. One other foreign member of this Shin-Hanga circle was British painter Charles Bartlett (1860–1940), who like Leach had studied under British artist Frank Brangwyn. During his stay in Tokyo between 1915 and 1917, Bartlett designed thirty-eight prints for Watanabe. Leach can be linked to Bartlett through a letter from Bartlett's wife Catherine, to Leach's wife Muriel, showing that the Bartletts were endorsing Leach's selling of antiques and his own art to Gurrey's Ltd, a gallery in Honolulu.<sup>40)</sup> Finally, the archive also reveals that Leach himself was on friendly terms with Watanabe Shozaburo; a 1923 letter from Watanabe reveals that Leach had translated titles and descriptions for his prints, most of which were exported to the

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37) The name “Scott” appears in the 1911 diary in the entry for March 30; Yanagi praises Scott in a letter dated June 7, 1915 [11609].

38) *The Foundations of Japan* (New York, 1922), pp.98–106

39) Yanagi to Leach [11620].

40) Letter of May 5, 1917, part of a set of Gurrey-related materials [11805–11808].

United States and Europe.<sup>41)</sup>

The name of E.E. Speight (dates unknown) occurs at least three times in the Leach archives. After working as a high school English teacher in Japan for over a decade, in 1921 Speight became a teacher of English composition at Tokyo Imperial University. He had considerable knowledge of Indian philosophy and literature, which would have made him attractive to Leach and Yanagi, especially after the high-profile visit of Indian poet and cultural revivalist Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) to Japan in 1916–1917. An April 15, 1919 letter from Speight in Tokyo to Leach in Abiko, mentions Speight's love of William Blake and belatedly, Tagore, and speaks eagerly of an upcoming meeting with Yanagi at Abiko; four days later, another letter from Speight confirms that he had indeed visited.<sup>42)</sup> In 1920, Speight wrote about Leach's drawings for *The Japan Advertiser*. After Leach returned to England Speight continued to write him, and a letter of Jan. 21, 1921 suggests that in addition to Yanagi, Speight had gotten to know Tomimoto.<sup>43)</sup> A letter written by Yanagi in the 1920s mentions that Speight had introduced him to the great Indian art historian Ananda Coomaraswamy (1887–1947).<sup>44)</sup> In 1924 Speight left Japan for India to teach at the University of Hyderabad, and his name is mentioned in passing in the letters of Tagore and Gandhi.<sup>45)</sup> Speight's introduction to the teachings of Tagore may have been instrumental in Leach's later being invited to teach at Dartington Hall, an experimental community/school founded by a wealthy disciple of Tagore, Leonard Elmhirst (1893–1974).

A friend of Speight in Tokyo, and occasionally mentioned in Leach's own records, is Gurcharan Singh (1898–1966), who began ceramics by helping a Delhi brick-maker and then went to Japan in 1919 to study industrial ceramics at the Higher Technical School, Asakusa. However

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41) Watanabe to Leach [2380].

42) [2327, 2328]

43) [2364]

44) [11625]

45) In 1906 Speight co-authored a book on the history of British seafaring with Cornish scholar Robert Morton Nance (1873–1959). Nance's son Dicon came to the Leach pottery in the 1920s as a student and eventually married Leach's daughter Eleanor.

Singh found industrial training to his dislike and gravitated toward the new craft movement. He first appears in the archive in a postcard sent from Korea on August 25, 1920, telling Leach that he loved Korea “next to my motherland.” On October 30 of that year, Yanagi mentioned in a letter that, “Singh has become a great friend — yet another devotee of Korea.” On January 9 of the following year, Singh wrote to Leach from Tokyo, saying that he had started work under Leach’s and Tomimoto’s “great teacher,” Urano Shigekichi. Finally, on Feb. 27, 1922, Singh wrote to Leach on his way home to India, mentioning the deep influence of Yanagi and Tomimoto over the three years of his study in Japan; he also credited Leach with helping him see Japan.<sup>46)</sup> Singh’s return to India coincided with Tagore’s renaissance of Indian art and craft, and he went on to become India’s pioneering studio potter. His legacy carries on in the Andretta Pottery and Crafts Society, now run by his son Mansimran Singh, who later studied with Leach in England. With this distinguished career, we are left to wonder why Gurcharan Singh does not appear in the published writings of Leach or Yanagi. For these two men, “East and West” was often, but perhaps unintentionally, confined to “Japan and Europe.”

## Conclusions

What did Leach find in Tokyo that propelled him toward the new craft? First, he had instant access to the Tokyo art establishment as well as its younger avant-garde members. At that very moment that art world was moving toward a more horizontal notion of production: artists around Leach were working in woodblock prints, fans, textiles, furniture designs, and illustrations of all kinds. Second, Leach began to sell his products just as department stores began to experiment with *sho-geijutsuhin* or “small artworks” for a broad, upper middle-class audience. Third, the heterogeneous nature of the Tokyo ceramics industry opened up the chance to make ceramics in the Raku mode, a technology that was compatible with painting and graphic art. Fourth, the Abiko experience provided Leach with the

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46) [2340, 11625, 2350, 11627], respectively.

philosophical perspectives and rhetoric to develop his idea of “artist-potter.” Fifth, his “foreign” circle (always with Yanagi as an important member) helped him to see the possibilities for boundary crossing, which he would frequently call the “meeting of the East and West.”

Considering Leach’s reputation as a pioneering artist-craftsman and the extent of his network, we find some curious absences in his private records. One is that, despite Leach’s fondness and respect for Tomimoto Kenkichi, there is little mention about the incredible range of Tomimoto activities in areas such as woodblock prints and interior design. Nor do we hear about the precociousness of Tomimoto’s writing about design, William Morris and the future of craft. Nor does Leach write about Tsuda Seifu (1880–1978), Takamura Toyochika, or Fujii Tatsukichi (1881–1964), all of whom were pioneering in crafts production in Tokyo.<sup>47)</sup> The overall impression is that, especially after 1916, Leach’s Tokyo web was increasingly mediated by Yanagi; that may have excluded other possibilities.

We have detailed how aspects of Bernard Leach’s development of a new type of potter were specific to Tokyo in the late Meiji and Taisho periods. On the other hand, we should not ignore that Leach’s “Tokyo decade” coincided with the worldwide movement to change human life, chiefly by reevaluating the relationship between work, beauty and daily existence. The geopolitical dimension of this phenomenon was the frequent but unequal encounter between cultures. Leach was a part of this. Of course the person who appears in these diaries and letters is not yet a visionary leader, but an energetic and inquisitive young man full of desires and interests. It should not surprise us that some of these are contradictory. These irregularities notwithstanding, the documentary record from his early Tokyo years shows Bernard Leach to be a key donor—and a recipient—in a new phase of Japanese craft history.

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47) Leach must have been aware of Tsuda as a collaborator with Tomimoto; also Tsuda, Fujii and Leach’s works were exhibited together on a few occasions. Fujii seems to have visited Leach at Sakuragi-cho in 1910 or 1911, although his name does not occur in the diaries. Beyond Tokyo, Leach seems to have no knowledge of Kawai Unosuke’s pioneering work in Kyoto.

**Abstract**

Modern craft began to develop in Japan in the second decade of the twentieth century, based chiefly in Tokyo. Artists and designers without formal workshop training began to experiment in craft production. Although this episode is often recounted as an inevitable stage of modernism, primary sources reveal how the new crafts depended on particular institutional and human networks, access to certain types of technology, and new markets. The diaries and correspondence of British ceramicist Bernard Leach (1887–1979), now available online through the Crafts Study Centre in Farnham, UK, permit a careful reconsideration of these conditions. With the exception of a short period of residence in China, Leach resided in Tokyo between 1909 and 1920. His papers demonstrate interdependencies with the faculty of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and the Shirakaba literary group. Leach’s introduction to ceramics, with its technical and design challenges, emerges in these pages. Leach and fellow crafts pioneer Tomimoto Kenkichi (1886–1963) exploited neighborhood opportunities for making low-fired painted ceramics, the ideal technology for infusing “art” into ceramics. We see how the new “artist-craftsman” depended on the development of the urban art gallery and the department store. The materials also expose sources for the conceptual profile of the modern studio potter, including solo production, rural lifestyle, and an eclectic, “ethnographic” design concept. Artistic modernism in general depended on encounters with cultural others, and through Leach, we understand how modern handmade ceramics reciprocally connected to notions of “Japan” and additionally, “Japan’s others.”