The Genealogy of Japanese Museums: From the Shōsōin Treasury in Nara to the Östasiatiska Museet in Stockholm

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Keywords:
Shōsōin; Kunstkammer; Global Art History; Exhibition Ideology; Japanese Aesthetics ("Ma")

ABSTRACT:

This paper re-examines the Shōsōin from a global perspective, comparing it with the Western "Kunstkammer" to clarify differences in their functions and ideologies. While the Dresden Kunstkammer, established by Elector August of Saxony, aimed for an encyclopedic visualization of world order through the systematic classification of natural and man-made objects, the Shōsōin's primary characteristic lies in its long-term sealing and non-public nature. For over a millennium, the Shōsōin preserved the cherished items of Emperor Shōmu, maintaining the "sacredness" of the Imperial family. The study further explores the intersection of Eastern and Western exhibition ideologies by tracing the influence of Japanese aesthetics on the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities in Stockholm. Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf's 1926 visit to the Shōsōin and the subsequent adoption of Japanese spatial concepts, such as "ma" (interval), by Director Bo Gyllensvärd, mark a transition from "exotic decoration" to a serene, subjective viewing experience. Ultimately, the Shōsōin's evolution from a sacred treasury to a modern cultural property demonstrates a unique circulation of spirituality and aesthetics in global art history.

Il presente contributo riesamina il deposito dello Shōsōin da una prospettiva globale, confrontandolo con la "Kunstkammer" occidentale al fine di chiarirne le differenze fondamentali in termini di funzioni e ideologie. Mentre la Kunstkammer di Dresda, istituita dall'Elettore Augusto di Sassonia, mirava a una visualizzazione enciclopedica dell'ordine mondiale attraverso la classificazione sistematica di oggetti naturali e artificiali, la caratteristica primaria dello Shōsōin risiede nella sua natura non pubblica e nella sua rigorosa sigillatura a lungo termine. Per oltre un millennio, lo Shōsōin ha preservato i beni preziosi dell'imperatore Shōmu, mantenendo intatta la "sacralità" della famiglia imperiale. Lo studio esplora inoltre l'intersezione tra le ideologie espositive orientali e occidentali, ripercorrendo l'influenza dell'estetica giapponese sul Museo delle Antichità dell'Estremo Oriente di Stoccolma. La visita del principe ereditario Gustavo Adolfo allo Shōsōin nel 1926 e la successiva adozione di concetti spaziali giapponesi, come il "ma" (intervallo), da parte del direttore Bo Gyllensvärd, segnano una transizione cruciale dalla "decorazione esotica" a un'esperienza di visione serena e soggettiva. In definitiva, l'evoluzione dello Shōsōin da tesoro sacro a bene culturale moderno dimostra una circolazione unica di spiritualità ed estetica nella storia dell'arte globale.

Opening Picture:

Abraham and Wenzel Jamnitzer, Statuette of Daphne with Coral Tines, Silver, partially gilt, coral, enamel, late 16th century, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden.

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Introduction - The Dawn of Exhibitions in Japan

The first modern exhibition in Japan was the "Kyoto Exhibition," held in 1871 at Nishi Honganji Temple through the cooperation of Kyoto Prefecture and the private sector. The organizers were three wealthy merchants from Kyoto: Mitsui Hachirōemon, Ono Zensuke, and Kumaya Kyūbei. The duration was 33 days, from October 10 to November 11. The objective was to bring back the flow of people to Kyoto, which had lost its vitality due to the relocation of the capital to Tokyo. Although the movement of foreigners was restricted at the time, announcements were also made to residents of Tokyo, Yokohama, and Kobe. The exhibits consisted of 166 Japanese products, 131 Chinese products, and 39 Western products, totaling 336 items, and the number of visitors recorded was 11,455.[1]

In the following year, 1872, the "Yushima Seidō Exhibition," the first organized by the Ministry of Education in Tokyo, was held at the Taiseiden Hall of Yushima Seidō. This exhibition, larger in scale than the one in Kyoto, also served as preparation for the exhibits as the Meiji government was scheduled to participate for the first time in the 1873 Vienna World's Fair. The "Golden Shachihoko" (fig. 1) of Nagoya Castle, which had been presented to the Ministry of the Imperial Household, garnered immense popularity and was also displayed at the Vienna World's Fair. In addition, a total of 798 items were exhibited, including 18 imperial treasures dedicated to Yushima Seidō by the Tokugawa family, as well as antiques, specimens, and domestic products, and the total number of visitors reached 150,000. With an average of 3,000 visitors crowding in per day, the exhibition was so popular that its duration had to be extended by a month. For this reason, the Yushima Seidō Exhibition is often regarded as the precursor to full-fledged exhibitions that created the modern Japanese exhibition boom. Furthermore, because the Tokyo National Museum designates this exhibition as the year of its founding,[2] many studies unravel the history of museums in Japan starting from this exhibition; however, it must be corrected based on historical facts that the first exhibition in Japan was the Kyoto Exhibition.

When looking at the history of exhibitions, there is an unavoidable tendency to be bound by a critical awareness that modern Japan and Westernization are two sides of the same coin. However, in this paper, I would like to move beyond such a modern framework of exhibitions modeled after the West and consider the origins of Japanese museums from an art-historical and cultural-historical perspective. To that end, more than anything else, one should begin with the "Shōsōin" (fig. 2), an ancient Japanese treasury. This is because by relativizing the origins and history of Japanese museums, the genealogy of Japanese museums should become visible.

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Fig. 1: Golden Shachihoko (Tiger-headed carp), 1612 (destroyed by aerial bombardment in 1945), Nagoya Castle. Photo of staff of the Yushima Seidō Exposition in 1872 (taken by Yokoyama Matsusaburō). Photo credit: public domain (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Staff_of_the_Yushima_Seido_Exposition_in_Meiji_5.jpg).

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Fig. 2: Shōsōin Treasure House, Nara. Photo credit: public domain (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Shosoin-shouso.jpg).

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The Shōsōin as the Origin of Japanese Museums

First, let us confirm the history of the Shōsōin and the characteristics of its collection. Located within the former precincts of Tōdaiji Temple in Nara, which was the capital of Japan until the end of the 8th century, it is currently a national institution under the administration of the Imperial Household Agency. In the 8th century, "Shōsō" (principal storehouses) were established in Buddhist temples and government offices throughout the country to house important items. Since "Shō" carries the meanings of "important" and "central," the single building that stands today as the Shōsōin is the one built at the center of the warehouse complex when Tōdaiji was founded as Japan's most central temple.[3] The frontage is approximately 33 meters, the depth is approximately 9.4 meters, the floor height is approximately 2.7 meters, and the total height is approximately 14 meters. Cypress was used in the wooden construction, and 40 floor pillars stand on foundation stones with a diameter of 60 centimeters. While the exact date of construction of this treasury is unknown, records indicate it was completed by March 759. The treasures housed therein were those offered to the Birushana Butsu (Great Buddha) of Tōdaiji on July 22, 756, the occasion of the forty-ninth-day memorial service of Emperor Shōmu, who founded Tōdaiji, and consisted of 650 items cherished by the Emperor and 60 types of medicines.

More than anything else, it is accurate to say that the primary characteristic of the Shōsōin lies in its "perpetual preservation." The items housed here are offerings to the Imperial family with clear origins and are rich in international flavor, befitting Nara as the terminus of the Silk Road. While there are examples of treasures dedicated to royal families for similar purposes, such as those from the Egyptian dynasties, these are ultimately burial goods, and there is no other instance in which items have been protected above ground.[4] Because the five volumes of the list of offerings (Kenmotsu-chō) by Empress Kōmyō have been handed down to the present day, it is globally rare to be able to verify which existing works correspond to which entries in the catalog based on name, quantity, dimensions, materials, techniques, and provenance, including missing items.[5] The treasures are diverse, including furnishings such as rugs, folding screens, mirrors, and fans; musical instruments such as the biwa, flute, and koto; game equipment such as *go* and *sugoroku*; as well as stationery, eating and drinking vessels, Buddhist ritual implements, and medicines. Many of these, such as the *Raden Shitan no Gogen Biwa* (Five-stringed *biwa* lute of red sandalwood with mother-of-pearl inlay) (fig. 3) and the *Hakururi no Wan* (White glass bowl), are imported goods, but some, including the *Torige Ritsujo no Byōbu* (Folding screen with figures of ladies under trees decorated with bird feathers), were produced in 8th-century Japan, and recent investigations suggest that armor and weapons are mostly of Japanese manufacture.[6] Regarding the total number of treasures, approximately 9,000 items are currently organized and confirmed, but since a single item may contain dozens or hundreds of pieces, the

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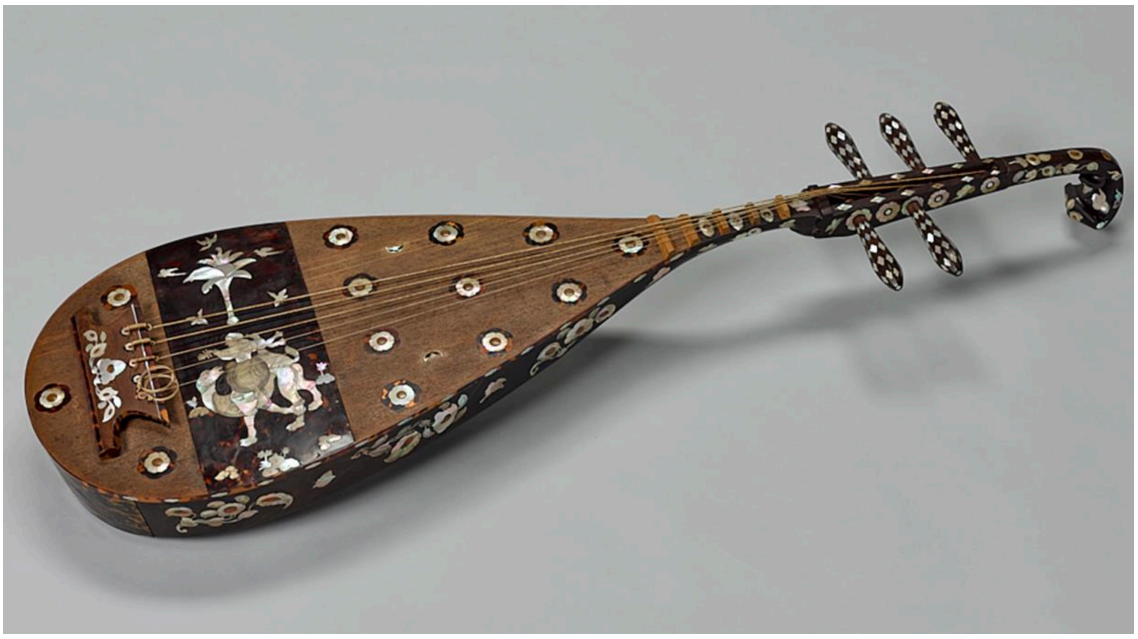

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Fig.3: Raden Shitan no Gogen Biwa (Five-stringed *biwa* lute of red sandalwood with mother-of-pearl inlay), Shōsōin, Nara. Photo credit: Shosoin.

total reaches several hundred thousand.

The fact that the Shōsōin has been strictly managed with its doors sealed by the Emperor's "Chokufū" (Imperial Seal) is the greatest factor in how the treasures have been protected for over 1,250 years. However, several instances are known in which powerful figures of the time ordered the opening of the seal to view the treasures. This is thought to have carried a political meaning of displaying power sufficient to surpass that of the Imperial family. The first record of such an opening was on September 30, 1019, during the Heian period, by Fujiwara no Michinaga, who was at the pinnacle of aristocratic politics. Historical materials clarify that he dispatched a messenger to fetch the keys from Kyoto and that Tōdaiji officials and government officers inspected the treasures inside the warehouse.[7] While it is not explicitly stated what Michinaga specifically viewed, there is no doubt that he possessed a strong curiosity toward the treasures of the Nara period.

Particularly famous is the record of the cutting (sectioning) of the agarwood *Ōjukukō* (fig. 4) performed by the warrior class during the Muromachi period. This single piece of fragrant wood, also known by the name "Ranjatai," is a massive object measuring 156 centimeters in length and weighing 11.6 kilograms. Against the backdrop of the development of Kōdō (the Way of Incense), three generations of Shoguns from the Muromachi Shogunate enjoyed this world-renowned fragrance: Ashikaga Yoshimitsu in 1385, Yoshinori in 1429, and Yoshimasa in 1465. Furthermore, in 1574, Oda Nobunaga also performed a cutting. At first glance, these acts might appear to be destructive behavior deviating from the preservation of the treasures; however, the sections where the wood was cut are marked, and since the amounts removed were also small, it is inferred that a certain degree of respect for the Imperial family's treasures was maintained. In fact, at the time of the cutting, they followed the procedure of cutting two pieces and presenting

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one of them to the Emperor of the time.[8] Since Nobunaga, during the Edo period (17th–18th centuries) as well, inspections, repairs, and the organization of documents were performed several times by order of the Shogun, but no record remains of "Ranjatai" being cut.[9]

The last person to cut this "Ranjatai" was Emperor Meiji. According to the *Meiji Tennō Ki* (Chronicles of Emperor Meiji), during an Imperial visit to Nara on February 9, 1877, the Emperor viewed the treasures of the Shōsōin and ordered Machida Hisanari, Director of the Museum Bureau of the Home Ministry, to cut off 2 *sun* (approximately 6 centimeters). It is recorded that when the Emperor himself burned this upon returning to his temporary residence, a fragrant scent filled the surroundings.[10] Even though it was an "Imperial treasure," this event was an extremely important historical incident symbolizing the authority of Emperor Meiji as the head of a modern state.

Public Opening of the Shōsōin and Exhibitions

It was not until the Meiji period and thereafter that the Shōsōin came to be opened to the public. A major reason behind its opening by the Meiji government in 1872 was the urgent need to take measures for the preservation of ancient cultural properties, as the dispersal of treasures from temples in Nara and Kyoto had become an issue due to the *Haibutsu Kishaku* (anti-Buddhist movement) following the Meiji Restoration. With this unsealing as an opportunity, inspections and the creation of catalogs for the treasures were vigorously pursued. At the same time, an investigation into items for display at the 1873 Vienna World's Fair was conducted, but ultimately, no Shōsōin treasures were sent to Vienna.[11]

However, following the success of the Kyoto Exhibition, an exhibition was also planned in Nara, and with the holding of the "First Nara Exhibition" in 1875 at the Tōdaiji Great Buddha Hall and its cloisters as the

Fig. 4:
Ōjukukō, Incense wood, Shōsōin, Nara.
Photo credit: Shosoin.

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venue, the treasures gained their first opportunity for public viewing. In the *Nara Hakurankai Buppin Mokuroku* (Nara Exhibition Item Catalog), it is noted that the majority of the items on display at the venue were imperial treasures from the Shōsōin treasury, and the *Ōjukukō* was included among the 220 exhibited items.[12] Similar to the previous Kyoto Exhibition and the Yushima Seidō Exhibition, while it possessed the character of an industrial exhibition, the fact that many Shōsōin treasures—which had never been shown to the common people—were exhibited became a topic of great interest, recording as many as 170,000 visitors during the 80-day session from March 1 to May 20. There had been no prior instance of so many people seeing the Shōsōin treasures, and through this, the existence of the Shōsōin became widely known both domestically and abroad.[13] The exhibits from the Shōsōin were treated as special from that time, and catalogs were specially produced. This can be called the origin of the "Shōsōin Exhibition" that began in 1946 and continues to the present day, and there is no doubt that the Nara Exhibition was the budding of a full-fledged "art exhibition" in Japan and a major turning point in museum history.

Thereafter, the Nara Exhibition was held 18 times until 1894, and the Shōsōin treasures were offered for public viewing a total of four times: the second in 1876, (the exhibition was not held in 1877 due to the Seinan Rebellion),[14] the third in 1878, and the fifth in 1880. However, because the exhibition environment was almost outdoors, damage occurred due to humidity and ultraviolet rays, and public opening was suspended from a preservation standpoint. In 1879, the minister of Home Affairs Itō Hirobumi proposed installing display shelves inside the treasury to balance preservation with public viewing while avoiding the movement of the treasures. In response to this, Kurokawa Mayori (1829-1906), a scholar of Japanese classics who was involved in the exhibition regulations for the Vienna World's Fair, took the lead in producing display shelves using cypress wood and German-made glass, making exhibition viewing inside the treasury possible in 1882.[15] During this period, in 1881 while display work was underway, it is recorded in a travelogue that Prince Albert Victor and Prince George (later George V) of the United Kingdom visited and were among the first to view them.[16] From 1883 onward, viewing was restricted to the time of the annual "Bakuryō" (airing) for administrative reasons, but special unsealings for foreign dignitaries were frequently performed.[17] In particular, when the Crown Prince of Sweden, Gustaf Adolf (later King Gustaf VI Adolf, 1882-1973), who specialized in archaeology, visited Japan in 1926, an intensive investigation of the treasures spanning three days was permitted.[18] This experience by Gustaf Adolf later became the key to the reception of Japanese art in Sweden.

In order for the general public to be able to view the treasures without their qualifications being questioned, one must wait for the special exhibition of the Shōsōin held at the Tokyo Imperial Household Museum in 1940. Despite the short duration of 20 days, it recorded an attendance of 400,000 people.[19] Thereafter, exhibitions of the Shōsōin

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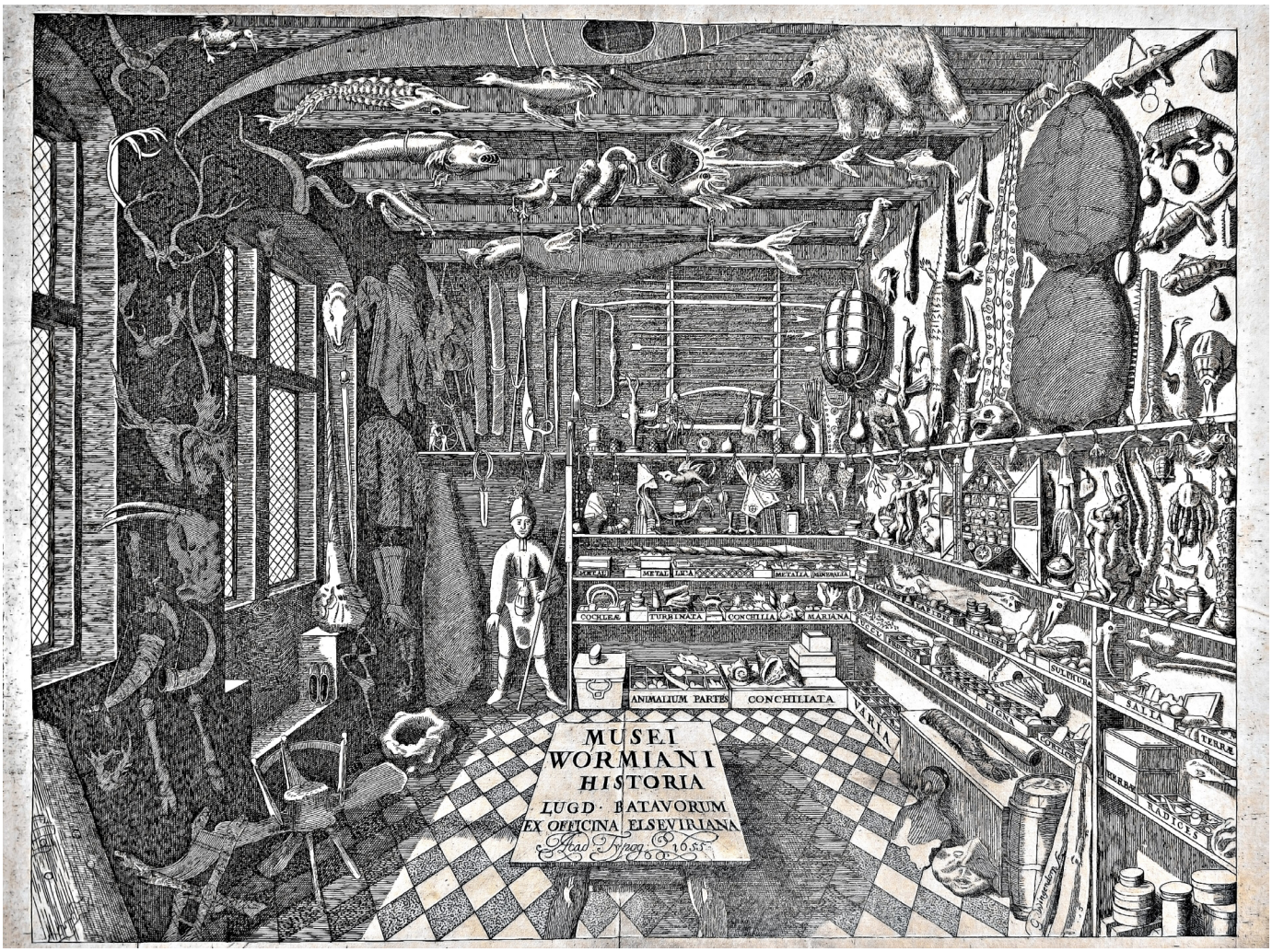

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were suspended due to World War II; however, in 1946, the idea of opening them to the general public emerged among influential figures in Nara who lamented that "a sense of humiliation from a national inferiority complex is spreading," and a petition was submitted to the Minister of the Imperial Household by Ono Shōichi, Chairman of the Nara Prefecture Tourism Association, on June 8.[20] In response to this, it was decided that the treasures, which had been evacuated for the sake of preservation, would be opened to the public when they were returned to the Shōsōin, and on October 18 of the same year, the "Special Viewing of Shōsōin Imperial Treasures" was held at the Nara Imperial Household Museum. Although it was initially planned as a one-time event, it was decided that it would also be held the following year due to comments from many visitors such as, "it gave me the courage to live."[21] Since then, with the exception of three special exhibitions in Tokyo, it has been held every autumn without fail to the present day. Every year, 60 to 70 strictly selected treasures are transported to and displayed at the Nara National Museum following the "Ceremony of Unsealing" held in October. The fact that there are treasures shown for the first time every year to the present day also speaks to the volume of the Shōsōin's collection.

Fig. 5:
Wormius' cabinet of curiosities, Frontispiece of *Musei Wormiani Historia*, engraving, 1655. Photo credit: public domain(https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1655_-_Frontispiece_of_Museum_Wormiani_Historia.jpg).

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Kunstkammer and Shōsōin

In order to re-examine this genealogy of the Shōsōin, or the problematic system of museology, from a more global perspective, I would next like to attempt a comparison between the "Kunstkammer" (fig. 5), which represents the genealogy of treasuries in the West, and the Shōsōin. The monumental work by Krzysztof Pomian, *Le Musée, une histoire mondiale* (The World History of Museums and Art Galleries, 3 volumes), is known as a landmark study that describes the history of human collecting by expanding its scope from antiquity to modern Europe, and further to China and Japan. In particular, Volume 1, *Du trésor au musée* (From the Treasury to the Museum), was epoch-making in that it presented a comprehensive study of the "Kunstkammer"—cabinets of curiosities that flourished in courts north of the Alps from the 16th century onward—as the starting point of ancient treasuries.[22] According to this, the Kunstkammer is the archetype of treasuries in the West, and Pomian uses this as a starting point to discuss the development toward modern museums and art galleries.[23] Furthermore, Volume 3, *À la conquête du monde* (Conquest of the World), as the title suggests, overlooks the phenomenon of the global diffusion of the Western-style museum model from the 19th century onward, and can be evaluated as a pioneering achievement in global art history that also brings Japan and China into its scope. However, in this book, despite the name "Shōsōin" being mentioned twice, a full-scale comparative study is not conducted, and the discussion remains limited to touching upon the existence of the Imperial collection handed down for over a millennium.[24] The possibility that Pomian could not sufficiently access Japanese-language materials cannot be denied as a reason for this. Therefore, this paper aims to inherit the task that Pomian was unable to accomplish and clarify the functions fulfilled by Eastern and Western treasuries and the differences in their character by comparing the Kunstkammer and the Shōsōin.

As already confirmed, the fact that the Shōsōin was maintained in an "untouched" state from the 8th century to the 19th century is an extremely rare phenomenon even from a global perspective. On the other hand, what kind of character did the Kunstkammer, which developed from the treasuries of German princely nobility in the 16th century, possess? Here, I would like to take up the Kunstkammer of the Electors of Saxony as an object of comparison. The collection currently known as the "Green Vault" (Grünes Gewölbe) of the Dresden State Art Collections is a case worthy of comparison with the Shōsōin in terms of its scale and continuity to the present day. The starting point of the Elector of Saxony's collection lay in the passion for collecting tools by Augustus (1526–1586). It is said that a room named "Kunstkammer" was established in 1560, and upon the death of Augustus in February 1586, his son Christian I inherited it at the end of June the following year, 1857, and the first "Inventory (Inventar)" was created.[25] This inventory records over 7,000 tools and apparatuses, more than 400 scientific instruments and clocks, and furthermore, a vast library.[26] The collecting objective of the Kunstkammer was to encompass the wonders of natural objects (Nat-

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uralia) and man-made objects (Artificialia). Its encyclopedic character is an expression of the will to grasp the entire world, embodying the accumulation of universal knowledge through the monarch's collection. In particular, what Augustus collected with passion was a group of sophisticated craft works created through the fusion of nature and human labor. It can be said that in the *Statue of Daphne* (fig. 6), which combines red coral and sculpture, the ideology of the Kunstkammer—the union of nature and technical art—is succinctly demonstrated.

Furthermore, what should be noted is that the Kunstkammer of Dresden Castle was not limited to being a simple storage space but was also a site of production. According to the inventory, there were seven rooms on the third and fourth floors of the west wing of the palace, and the holdings of each room are recorded in detail. The central room was called "the small chamber where my most gracious Elector draws."[27] Equipped with a "writing desk (Schreibtische)" and a "drawing desk (Reißtisch)," a private space was formed there that could be entered and exited via an indoor spiral staircase, avoiding public eye from the ground level. This staircase further led to an attic room on the fourth floor, where a "lathe room" was established for the hobby of ivory carving, and it is recorded that the workshop of the master court turner Egidius Lobenigk (1550–1595) was located nearby.[28] In this way, it is clear that Elector Augustus, who had established a drawing room and a lathe room within the palace, was a dilettante monarch participating in artistic practice. In fact, he received instruction in turning techniques from Lobenigk and produced 135 pieces of ivory sculpture (fig. 7). It is recorded that these were displayed on the tiers of an octagonal table in the Kunstkammer.[29] That is to say, the Kunstkammer simultaneously fulfilled the function of an exhibition room as well as a treasury.

The subsequent Saxon court expanded its collection primarily with artworks, using this Kunstkammer as a foundation. In particular, in the 18th century, Augustus the Strong (1670–1733) learned the art of utilizing paintings, prints, and medals as media for the representation of royal authority from the court culture of the French King Louis XIV, and organized Versailles-style court rituals. Furthermore, confrontation with the Ottoman Empire, despite being a hostile relationship, aroused interest in excellent arms and ornaments, leading to the formation of a world-scale Ottoman collection. The Orientalism that was sweeping Europe at the time drove him to the collection of East Asian ceramics. Furthermore, the spirit of scientific inquiry since Elector Augustus was directed toward the research of porcelain, which was still impossible to produce in Western Europe, and in 1709, the firing of hard-paste porcelain finally succeeded. When the Meissen Porcelain Manufactory was established in 1710, white porcelain was prized as diplomatic gifts and it brought enormous profits by monopolizing the European market. His son Frederick Augustus II (1696–1763), against the backdrop of the wealth inherited from Augustus the Strong, realized large-scale collections of Italian and Dutch paintings, including Raphael's *Sistine Madonna* (1512), and opened the way for the development of the Elector's

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Fig. 6: Abraham and Wenzel Jamnitzer, Statuette of Daphne with Coral Tines, Silver, partially gilt, coral, enamel, late 16th century, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photo credit: Grünes Gewölbe, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Foto: Jürgen Karpinski.

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collection into a modern art museum through the establishment of a picture gallery.[30] At the same time, the enrichment of the collection of scientific instruments, including British-made reflecting telescopes, expanded interest toward grasping the universe, including fixed stars and planets, rather than just the terrestrial world, further pushing forward the expansion of the worldview.[31]

When comparing the Kunstkammer of the Electors of Saxony with the Shōsōin, the differences in their fundamental character emerge more clearly. First, it can be said that the encyclopedic character of the Kunstkammer was an attempt to reconstruct a microcosm—that is, the entire world—within a room and to grasp it visually. It was not merely a collection, but a visualization of the possibility of symbolic acts to grasp the world order and, by extension, to rule. Entering the 18th century, under the influence of Enlightenment thought, such collections gradually moved toward public opening, and the dissemination of knowledge to the citizen class became an objective. At the same time, it also functioned as a device to boast of royal prestige. The scientific gaze and systematic classification directed toward the collection contributed to the development of academic disciplines in the West and, in particular, became the catalyst for preparing the establishment of natural history museums. Furthermore, art collections, through the ideology of the public opening and preservation of works, would form the institutional foundation of modern art museums. In contrast, the greatest characteristic of the Shōsōin is found rather in its long-term sealing and non-public nature. There, the primary objective was to preserve the cherished items of Emperor Shōmu in their original form and transmit them to future generations. For approximately seven hundred years, from the Middle Ages when political power shifted to the warrior class, through the early modern period, until political authority returned to the Emperor, this treasury escaped pillage and

Fig. 7: Augustus, Elector of Saxony, Artworks, ivory, late 16th century, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Photo credit: Grünes Gewölbe, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden. Foto: Dirk Weber.

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was inherited without the Imperial line being severed. Even taking this single point of continuity, the Shōsōin is an extremely rare case in world history. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the fact that it was virtually frozen for twelve hundred years until its unsealing by the Meiji government indicates that the Shōsōin treasures played a decisive role in constructing and maintaining the "sacredness" of the Imperial family.

In 1892, twenty years after the unsealing of the Shōsōin, the "Imperial Property Classification" (Gyobutsu Seiri-gakari) was established at the former Akasaka Detached Palace (now the State Guest House) in Tokyo, and a large-scale project for the reorganization and repair of the treasures spanning over ten years was carried out. In this process, the existence of treasures that no longer retained their original form due to deterioration over time or fading also became clear, and Shōsōin ancient textiles (kire) were classified into four stages, ranging from large fragments for which original judgment was possible to fine dust.[32] In 1914, the "Shōsōin Section" was placed in the Nara Imperial Household Museum, and the full-scale reorganization of ancient textiles began. The ancient textiles were stored in legged Chinese-style chests (Karabitsu), totaling 322 chests, and even the "dust" (jinkai) (fig. 8), which hardly retained any original form, was strictly preserved as an object of investigation.[33] Among this dust, parts of famous treasures or traces of production techniques are sometimes discovered, and it possesses value as precious historical material containing unknown information.[34] It goes without saying that academic significance is recognized in the remains left in large quantities themselves, but at the same time, it cannot be denied that a sense that even the dust was imbued with sacredness was at work in the background of why they were not discarded. Even if they are scraps of cloth, the vivid colors that recall the era of Emperor Shōmu seem to harbor a strong spiritual aura even today. The Shōsōin, which has been protected by sealing, pos-

Fig. 8: Jinkai (Fragments), Chest No. 81, Shōsōin, Nara. Photo credit: Shosoin.

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sesses a peculiarity comparable to sacred relics in the Christian world in terms of the "maintenance of sacredness." However, as if keeping pace with the era of modernization in which Japan opened its doors and promoted Westernization, the Shōsōin was finally opened. Public opening through the Nara Exhibition became the catalyst for transforming the Imperial treasures into cultural properties that symbolize the legitimacy of the state. In the process in which the system of public museums was being organized, the Shōsōin treasures continued to function as their important core. Despite this, it is difficult to say that sacredness was completely stripped from the Shōsōin treasures. Rather, due to their transcendent beauty and historical depth, even after being reorganized as modern cultural properties, they continue to harbor a unique spiritual brilliance.

Establishment of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm, and Japanese Exhibition Ideology

As previously mentioned, Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf of Sweden, accompanied by Princess Louise, arrived at the port of Yokohama on September 2, 1926, aboard the steamship *Siberia Maru*. He stayed at the Kasumigaseki Detached Palace in Tokyo, visited Nikko the following day, and after passing through Nagoya (fig. 9), entered Kyoto on September 20, staying at the Nara Hotel from the 24th to the 27th. During this period, it is said that he energetically inspected temples, shrines, ruins, and museums, and stayed overnight at the Shōjōshin-in on Mount Koya. He then continued his journey to Osaka, Beppu, and Nagasaki, before traveling to Busan and Gyeongju on the Korean Peninsula.[35] The Crown Prince, who was also known as an expert in archaeology and botany, had a profound knowledge of Eastern culture, and his greatest wish during his stay in Japan was to see and study the Shōsōin treasures in Nara firsthand. When the Shōsōin was unsealed through special measures by the Meiji government, the Crown Prince visited twice a day—morning and afternoon—during his three-day stay in Nara, patiently investigating almost all the treasures, showing particularly strong interest in the three-colored ceramics (Sansai).[36] As a commemorative gift for his visit, Emperor Taishō presented the Crown Prince with a ceramic vase with a "melon design" by Kiyomizu Rokubei V, and the Empress presented the Princess with an embroidered folding screen with a "chrysanthemum design."[37] After returning home, the Crown Prince opened these two works and other Japanese artworks to the public at the National Museum in Stockholm from June 3 to September 11, 1927, and records remain stating that after the exhibition ended, the works were returned to the Crown Prince and Princess.[38] The state of the exhibition was introduced with photographs in a weekly newspaper at the time and attracted the interest of many citizens (fig. 10).[39] There is a lack of direct materials to know exactly what Gustaf Adolf learned at the Shōsōin or what ideological influence he received. However, the fact that he opened the Japanese art to the public immediately after returning home can be interpreted as a clear expression of his will to share his artistic experience during

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Fig. 9: The Crown Prince and Princess visit a porcelain factory in Nagoya. Photo, 1926. Photo credit: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm, Sweden.

his trip to Japan with the citizens.

Thereafter, in 1931, an Exhibition of Japanese Art sponsored by the Japan-Sweden Society (*Svensk-japanska Sällskapet*) was held at the Artists' House (*Konstnärshuset*) in Stockholm. The venue displayed collections of ancient art such as old paintings, Buddhist statues, ukiyo-e, and netsuke that were held within Sweden.[40] Regarding this exhibition, Volume 2 of the Japanese journal *Bijutsu Kenkyū* (Journal of Art Studies, 1932) reported as follows: "During the session, we looked up to the visit of the Swedish Emperor and the Crown Prince… The exhibition was held with the purpose of introducing Japanese art, and the exhibits were selected from the Swedish Royal collection, the National Museum of Sweden collection, and Swedish private collections, totaling 712 items. The selection, display, and catalog commentary were mainly handled by Professor Elisseeff of the Musée Guimet in Paris."[41] From this, it can also be inferred that the collecting activities triggered by the Crown Prince's visit to the Far East formed the core of the exhibits. Around the same time, in 1929, the "Exhibition of Japanese Art in Paris" was held to introduce modern Japanese painting, which subsequently toured to the Netherlands and was well-received. In 1930, "*Esposizione d'Arte Giapponese*" (Exhibition of Japanese Art*)* was held in Rome, funded by Baron Okura Kishichiro (1882-1963). It centered on Nihonga painters belonging to the Japan Art Institute. All of these exhibitions primarily aimed to introduce modern Japanese painting (*Nihonga*) to European collectors who had previously been interested in Edo-period painting.[42] In contrast, the exhibition in Stockholm centered on ancient art and did not include a single modern Japanese painting. In this respect, it clearly stands apart from the trends in Paris and Rome during the same period. Furthermore,

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FRÅN KRONPRINSPARETS BESÖK PÅ GOTLAND.
(Se även närmast föregående nummer.)

KRONPRINSPARET OCH *i bakgrunden* ÄNKEMARKISINNAN MILFORD HAVEN *utanför Vänge kyrka.*
Foto. HELLGREN, Visby.
Kliché: Sjöberg, Gbg.

Kronprinsparets Gotlandsbesök avslutades den 31 maj efter ännu några innehållsrika dagar med utflykter till olika delar av den på forntida byggnader och minnesmärken rika ön. Efter besök i södra och mellersta Gotland ställdes den 30 maj kosan åt öster, där bl. a. Dalhems kyrka — en av öns vackraste och ståtligaste lantkyrkor — med stort intresse studerades. Vidare bestegs det märkliga befästa kalkberget Torsborgen, den mäktigaste av Gotlands fornborgar, varefter färden gick vidare till Gammelgarn och Gålrum, där ett nytt gravfynd i en rauk demonstrerades, samt därpå över ett flertal platser tillbaka till Visby. Sista dagen ställdes kosan norrut mot kyrkan och gravfälten i Sten-

KRONPRINSEN OCH PROFESSOR ROOSVAL *bese vid Hemse Folkhögskola den i Fardhem just under besöket funna guldbrakteten, ett av de praktfullaste fynd som någonsin gjorts i landet. Se bilden å nästa sida.*
Foto. HELLGREN, Visby.

GÅVOR TILL KRONPRINSPARET UNDER RESAN I JAPAN. *utställda för allmänheten å Nationalmuseum.*
Fr. v. BRODERAD SKÄRM från Kyoto. Gåva till KRONPRINSESSAN av KEJSARINNAN AV JAPAN. Ett utomordentligt handarbete. VAS AV ROKUBEI V. Gåva till KRONPRINSEN av KEJSAREN AV JAPAN. Rokubei var medlem av en gammal berömd krukmakare-dynasti. I glasmontern KERAMISKT GODS, skålar, vaser, teburkar m. m. — Foto. MALMSTRÖM, Sthlm. — Kliché: Sjöberg, Gbg.

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looking back, it is worth noting that in the "Exhibition of Great Japanese Art" held in Stockholm in 1911, as many as 1,968 works were displayed, many of which were exhibited again in the 1931 exhibition.[43] The 1911 exhibition was dedicated to Gustaf Adolf, who was the Crown Prince at the time, and it is not difficult to imagine that the Crown Prince's interest in ancient art was strongly reflected in the composition of the 1931 exhibition.

Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf was deeply involved in the establishment of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (*Östasiatiska Museet*) in

Fig. 10:
Gifts to the crown prince couple during their trip to Japan. On display to the public at the National Museum, photo, *Hvar 8 dag*, 1927, nr 24, s. 582, National Library of Sweden.

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Stockholm. In 1921, when the China Committee (*Kinakommittén*) was established as a research institution, the Crown Prince became one of its founding members, serving as chairman and providing funds while leading the collection of archaeological materials. These collections were opened to the public in 1929 and became the foundation for the subsequent Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities.[44] Following the death of Nils Palmgren (1890–1955), who had served as an advisor to the Crown Prince since 1933, Bo Gyllensvärd (1916–2004) took over the position. At the time, Gyllensvärd was the director of the Eastern Department of the Nationalmuseum, but he proposed a plan to integrate the Oriental art collections and related materials, which were dispersed between the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities and the Nationalmuseum, into a single building. This plan was realized in 1959 with the consent of Gustaf VI Adolf, who had already become King, and the King informed Gyllensvärd of his intention to eventually donate his entire collection to the museum.[45] The new building, renovated from the stables of the Royal Horse Guard built around 1700, opened on May 16, 1963. Gyllensvärd was appointed as the first director.

In drafting the exhibition plan, Gyllensvärd visited the Yamato Bunkakan in Nara, which had opened on October 31, 1960. This fact is conveyed through the memoirs of the art historian Yashiro Yukio (1890–1975), who was the first director of the Yamato Bunkakan. Yashiro writes as follows:

"It was around the spring of 1961 when a famous Italian countess, Marina Luling Buschetti, visited the Yamato Bunkakan..... After returning home, the countess sent a letter to the Yamato Bunkakan. According to it, she had received an invitation to a birthday celebration from the King of Sweden, so she went to Stockholm. After the King's banquet was over, the guests were encouraged by the King, who said, 'I love Oriental art and am currently having a museum built for my own collection. It is not yet complete, but please everyone, take a look at the museum in progress,' and the guests were guided to that museum. When she was taken there, she—that is, the countess—was surprised. The reason was that since she had just seen the Yamato Bunkakan in Nara the other day, this new museum in Stockholm remarkably reminded her of the Yamato Bunkakan. Thinking this was strange, she asked the young director of the museum, 'How did this come to be?' and the answer was, 'It is just as you observed. ***I was invited to the opening ceremony of the Yamato Bunkakan in Nara and made a special effort to attend. By order of the King, I traveled around the world's museums to study things that could serve as a reference for***

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> ***building a museum for the King's collection, and so I even attended the opening ceremony of the new museum in Nara.'*** *Recalling this upon seeing the Italian countess's letter, I remembered that there was a young man named Bo Gyllensvärd who had made a special effort to attend the opening ceremony of the Yamato Bunkakan from Stockholm, and he had told me that he had come by order of the King of Sweden."*[46]

Yashiro was unable to attend the opening ceremony of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, and King Gustaf VI Adolf never visited the Yamato Bunkakan.[47] However, the connection between the two dates back even further. In 1935, at "The International Exhibition of Chinese Art" held at Burlington House and sponsored by the Royal Academy, Yashiro and Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf stood in the same venue and were captured in the same photograph (fig. 11).[48] Although Yashiro does not mention this encounter in his *Memoirs*, and it is impossible to confirm today whether the Crown Prince spoke to Yashiro about his impressions of his stay in Japan or his vision for a new museum, it is clear they shared a connection.

So, what did Gyllensvärd learn from the Yamato Bunkakan, and what was the "affinity" felt by Countess Buschetti? Providing a clear answer to this question is not easy. As Giada Ricci aptly points out, the ideology of Japanese museum exhibition space is deeply related to pre-modern traditions—specifically, the aesthetic of *tokonoma* (alcove) and shelf decoration in *shoin*-style architecture shown in manuals for 16th-century tea masters such as *Kundaikan-souchouki* and *O-ka-*

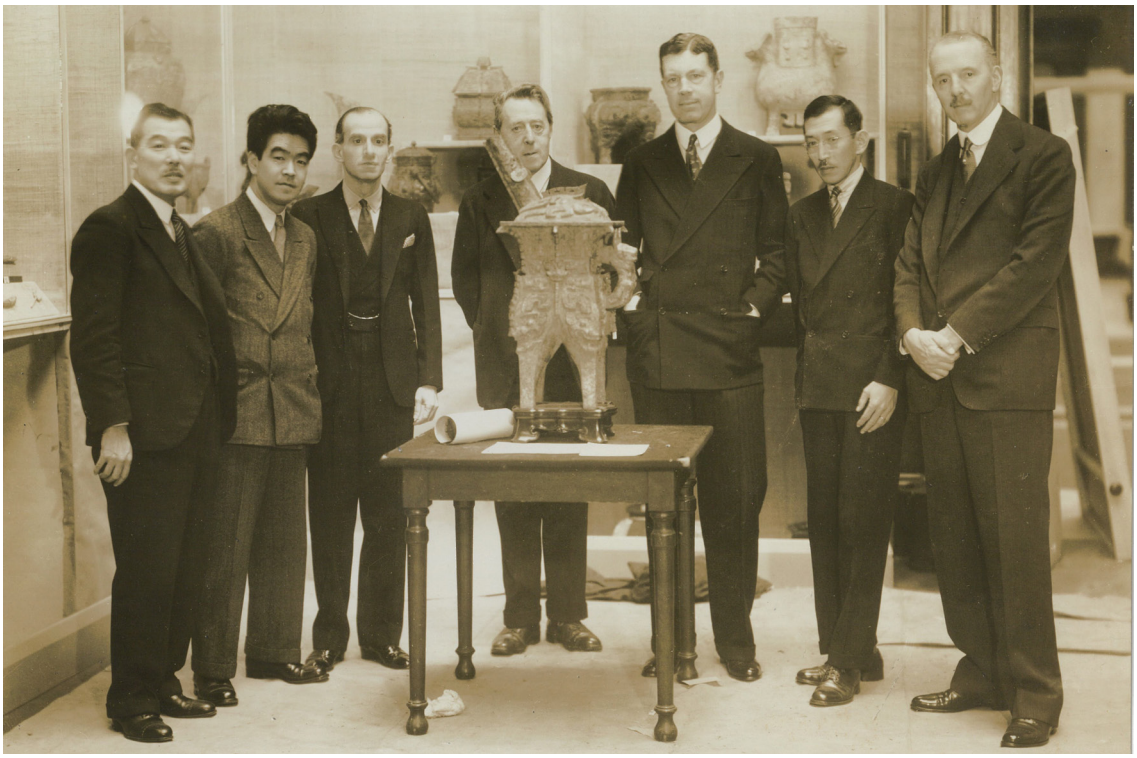
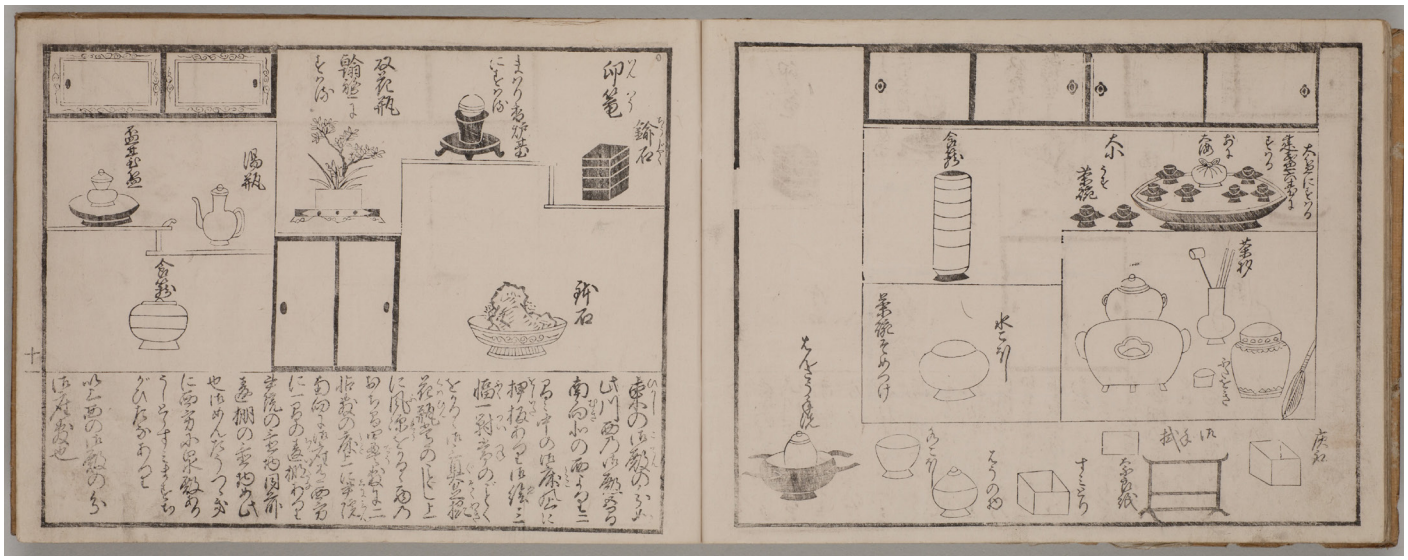


Fig. 11: Second from left, Yashiro Yukio, and third from right, Crown Prince Gustaf Adolf of Sweden. Opening of the International Exhibition of Chinese Art, London. Photo, 1935. Photo credit: Yashiro family.

Naoki Sato
The Genealogy of Japanese Museums: From the Shōsōin Treasury in Nara to the Östasiatiska Museet in Stockholm
https://doi.org/10.60923/issn.3034-9699/23731



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zari-sho (fig. 12).[49] Nevertheless, if one considers the fact that Gustaf Adolf had seen the exhibitions at the Nara Imperial Household Museum and the Shōsōin firsthand, it is not difficult to imagine that he might no longer have felt fully satisfied with the European court tradition—seen at the time in the Nationalmuseum in Stockholm—of arranging ceramics as wall decorations (fig. 13). It is natural to consider that the King's intention in ordering Gyllensvärd to investigate museums worldwide was to learn the aesthetics of Japanese exhibition spaces. From the exhibition photographs at the time of the opening of Östasiatiska Museet (the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities) (fig. 14), one can clearly read the reflection of Japanese spatial concepts. There, just as in the exhibitions at the Yamato Bunkakan, a sufficient "ma" (interval/space) is secured between works. This "ma" is none other than an aesthetic principle that creates a distance and tension where craft works shine most beautifully, based on the subtle arrangement of utensils nurtured in the tradition of *chanoyu* (tea ceremony). That quietly restrained spatial composition must have left a strong impression not only on Countess Buschetti but on many visitors. Furthermore, looking at the morphological similarity of the exhibition cases (fig. 15), one cannot help but recall a direct suggestion from the Yamato Bunkakan. Here, one can see one of the turning points in the exhibition of Oriental art in the West. That is, by actively introducing traditional Japanese aesthetics, a transition was realized to an exhibition ideology that liberated Oriental art from "exotic decoration" and allowed it to be experienced subjectively within a serene viewing space.

In this sense, the sealing and maintenance of sacredness in the Shōsōin, the reorganization of Japanese exhibition space in the Yamato Bunkakan, and its reception and transformation in the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities in Stockholm can be called important examples demonstrating the intersection of Eastern and Western views on treasures and exhibition ideologies. The comparison attempted in this paper is intended to provide a starting point for reconsidering

Fig. 12: *Sōami, O-kazari-sho*, c. 1523, published 1660. Photo credit: Tokyo University of the Arts Library.

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Fig. 13:
Exhibition gallery of Chinese ceramics at the National Museum, Stockholm, early 20th century.
Photo credit: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm, Sweden.

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Fig. 14:
Sculpture hall at the Östasiatiska Museet. Photo, 1965.
Photo credit: Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm, Sweden.

Fig. 15:
The exhibition gallery at the time of the opening of the Yamato Bunkakan. Photo, 1961.
Photo credit: The Museum Yamato Bunkakan.

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global art history, not only from the perspective of the institutional transition from treasuries to museums but also from the perspective of the circulation of spirituality and aesthetics that dwell within exhibition spaces.

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Endnotes:

1 Wada 2022, pp. 12-15.

2 Tokyo National Museum official website: https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_free_page/index.php?id=144.

3 Sugimoto 1967, pp. 4-5.

4 Sugimoto 1967, p. 33.

5 Sugimoto 1967, pp. 8-9.

6 For details on representative treasure techniques and materials, see: Nishikawa 2019.

7 Fujiwara no Sanesuke, *Shōyūki* (Diary of Fujiwara no Sanesuke), (61 volumes, covering the years 977–1040); *Hyakuren shō* (A collection of excerpts from court nobles' diaries) (author unknown, 13th century), etc. Quoted from: Yoneda 1998, p. 155.

8 Yoneda 1998, p. 162.

9 Yoneda 1998, pp. 161–163.

10 *Meiji Tennō Ki 1970*, pp. 53–54. Furthermore, on page 54, it is recorded that "Emperor Meiji first viewed the Nara Exhibition at the Tōdaiji Cloister and then unsealed the Shōsōin," but due to the Seinan Rebellion at the time of the Shōsōin visit, the Nara Exhibition of that year was not held. However, it is highly likely that he saw items arranged in the Tōdaiji Cloister in advance for exhibition preparations, and it is thought that the compilers later misidentified this as the "Nara Exhibition."

11 Yoneda 1998, pp. 175-176.

12 *Nara Hakurankai Zen-shi* (Pre-history of the Nara Exhibition), Nara Prefectural Library and Information Center, 2018. Published at the following URL: https://www.library.pref.nara.jp/sites/default/files/narahaku2018.pdf (2026.02.01). The "Buppin Mokuroku" (Item Catalog) is from the following: https://meta01.library.pref.nara.jp/opac/repository/repo/153598/ (2026.02.01).

13 Sugimoto 1967, p. 193.

14 In 1877, there was a visit to the Shōsōin from abroad that was important in art history. Designer Christopher Dresser, who arrived in Japan to deliver European craft products collected by the South Kensington Museum in London for donation to the Meiji government, visited the Shōsōin on February 3 under the guidance of Machida Hisanari and described his impressions regarding the imperial treasures in detail in the following book: Dresser, 1882, pp. 89 f.

15 Wada 1996, pp. 144–145.

16 Prince Albert Victor and Prince George of Wales 1886, pp. 110-111.

17 Wada 1996, p. 148.

18 Wada 1996, p. 148.

19 Yoneda 1998, pp. 183-184.

20 Nishiyama 2012, pp. 23-24.

21 Nishiyama 2012, p. 35.

22 In this paper, following Pomian, I use "Kunstkammer" in the sense of a treasury rather than "Wunderkammer." Although these two terms arose almost simultaneously in the latter half of the 16th century, strictly speaking, "Wunderkammer" was reported about 10 years later, in 1550, for the first time in connection with the collection of the Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand I. In 1565, the Munich physician and librarian Samuel van Quiccheberg used both terms, distinguishing the Kunstkammer as "a room of man-made objects (*artificiosarum rerum conclave*)" and the Wunderkammer as "a room of miraculous things (*miraculosarum rerum promptuarium*)." By 1594, in the will of Ferdinand II

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regarding the collection at Ambras Castle, these two terms were integrated as *Kunst- und Wunderkammer*. Currently, both terms are accepted in German without distinction. Scheicher 1996, pp. 520-552.

23 Pomian 2020, pp. 392-463.

24 Pomian 2022, pp. 315-320.

25 Minning 2010, No page number.

26 Syndram 2017, S. 197-198.

27 Recorded in the "Inventory" as "*In Meines gnedigsten Churfürsten und hern Reiß Cammer und kleinem Gemach*." Minning 2010; Watanabe-O'Kelly 2002, p. 75.

28 Minning 2010, No page number.

29 Maurice 1985, S. 56.

30 Bischoff 2005, pp. 26-27.

31 Bischoff 2005, p. 26.

32 Obi 2012, p. 41.

33 Obi 2012, p. 41.

34 Obi 2012, p. 41.

35 *Itinerary of Their Royal Highnesses The Crown Prince & Princess of Sweden, September-October, 1926*. This itinerary was changed several times and is bound into the following historical material. Note that there are also Japanese records by the Imperial Household Ministry regarding the changed itinerary. *Gaihin settai-roku: Sweden-koku Kōtaishi dō hi denka raikō no bu* (Records of Reception for Foreign Guests: Section on the Visit of the Crown Prince and Princess of Sweden), 1 vol., Shikibu-shoku (Board of Ceremonies), Taisho 15 (1926), Imperial Household Archives.

36 Almgren 1932, pp. 10-11.

37 Document record dated September 15, 1926, from the Minister of the Imperial Household to the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Extremely unusually, black-and-white photographs of both works are attached to this document. *Gaikō zōto-roku* (Records of Diplomatic Gifts and Responses), Shikibu-shoku (Board of Ceremonies), Taisho 15 (1926), Imperial Household Archives.

38 *Meddelanden från Nationalmuseum*, vol. VIII, 1927-1930, Stockholm, 1928, p. 37, p. 58; *Nämndprotokoll*, June 7, 1927, and October 10, 1927, Nationalmuseum's archive.

39 *HVAR 8 DAG*, 1927-6-12, n: 37, p. 582.

40 Elisseeff 1931.

41 En-enshi 1932, pp. 30-31.

42 Nagata 2008, pp. 20-25.

43 Wettergren 1911.

44 Okuda 1990, p. 52.

45 Okuda 1990, p. 52.

46 Emphasis added by the autor. Yashiro 1972, pp. 437-438.

47 Yashiro 1972., p. 439.

48 Taki 2025, p. 10.

49 Ricci 2023, pp. 171-173.

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