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EARLY MINGEI AND DEVELOPMENT OF JAPANESE CRAFTS, 1920s - 1940s

Chiaki AJIOKA

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of The Australian National University.

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ABSTRACT

There has been considerable interest, both in and outside Japan, in the Mingei movement which began in the 1920s. As a result, its theory and history have been studied widely. Most studies, however, have treated the movement in isolation and as one which was conceived, initiated and developed by Yanagi Sôetsu (1889-1961).

This thesis challenges the conventional view and argues that the movement had its roots in the development of modern craft in Japan which, in turn, had been influenced by modernist consciousness in art and literature. It does so by two methods: by setting the movement in the context of the modern development of craft and its appreciation, and by examining the contents of *Kôgei*, the magazine which acted as the principal mouthpiece of the movement from 1931 to 1939. The thesis thus establishes: that in its early stage the Mingei movement included different ideas on craft while sharing an appreciation for *getemono* (ordinary craft wares); that although Yanagi played the central role in the movement, his so-called 'Mingei theory' was by no means unconditionally accepted by the other members: and that a change in the character of the movement, from appreciative to quasi-religious, was brought about not so much by Yanagi himself as by those who put their complete faith in Yanagi's theory.

The thesis also argues that this change in the character of the movement did not affect the works of the craft artists of the Mingei movement; they produced their work like other modern Japanese craft artists of the same period, while supporting each other within the close membership.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- Volume One -

Acknowledgements ii

Abstract iii

Preface 1

Introduction 4

CHAPTER ONE: Social and Cultural Trends from around 1900 to the 1920s 24

1-1. Major social, economic and political changes 24

1-2. New movements in art 33

1-3. Iwamura Tôru and the *Bijutsu Shonpô* 38

1-4. Literature and art 40

1-5. Takamura Kôtarô and 'A Green Sun' 58

1-6. The new art criticism of *Shirakaba* 68

1-7. Modern developments in printmaking 81

CHAPTER TWO: Development of Craft from 1868 to 1910 96

2-1. Effects of social changes on craft industry in early Meiji 96

2-2. Introduction of Japanese art to the West: early exhibitions 104

2-3. Export-oriented production of craft: 1870s 113

2-4. Efforts for preservation and development of crafts: nationalism from the late 1880s 117

2-5. Art and craft 130

2-6. Emergence of new designs 135

CHAPTER THREE: The New Craft Movement and Various Modern Craft Theories 140

3-1. The concept of craft before 1910 140

3-2. Tomimoto Kenkichi and his individualism in ceramics 150

3-3. Fujii Tatsukichi and his concept of craft 163

3-4. Takamura Toyochika, from *Mukei* to *Jitsuzai Kôgei* 166

3-5. The Imperial Craft Society 176

3-6. The *me-kiki* tradition 178

3-7. Theories of modern craft 188

CHAPTER FOUR: The Early History and Members of the Mingei Movement 202

4-1. The first phase: 1910s - 1931 206

4-2. The second phase: 1931 - 1934 244

4-3. The third phase: 1934 - 1940s 252

4-4. Yoshida Shôya and the New Mingei movement 254

CHAPTER FIVE: Criticisms and Problems of the Mingei Movement 258

5-1. Criticisms of Yanagi's 'formula' 259

5-2. Problems of the movement 274

CHAPTER SIX: The Mingei Movement as a Modern Craft Movement 306

6-1. Beauty and the direct perception 308

6-2. Definitions of craft 314

6-3. Kamigamo Mingei Cooperative 317

6-4. Kuroda Tatsuaki 336

6-5. Serizawa Keisuke 340

6-6. Munakata Shikô 346

Conclusion 359

Bibliography 363

- Volume Two -

Chronology 1

Appendix 1: Glossary of groups, institutions and publications 9

Appendix 2: Biographical notes 28

Appendix 3: Yanagi Sôetsu 'The Beauty of Craft' 51

Appendix 4: Mizutani Ryôichi 78

'The Creative Aspect of Appreciation' 79

'Communal Life and Craft' (extract) 85

'Talk with Young Craftsmen' (extract) 91

Appendix 5: List of the *zadankai* organised by *Kôgei* 96

List of figures 99

Figures 111

PREFACE

This thesis will focus on the Mingei movement, the folk craft movement led by Yanagi Sôetsu, which originated in Japan in the late 1920s and involved some of the most prominent craft artists of modern Japan, such as Hamada Shôji, Kawai Kanjirô, Munakata Shikô and Serizawa Keisuke. The English potter Bernard Leach was also an important participant in the movement, working and exhibiting with them. The aim of the thesis is to place the movement in the context of the development of crafts in modern Japan, that is to say, to examine the works of the craft artists of the Mingei movement who are often called (to their dismay) *mingei sakka* (the Mingei craft artists), a term which appears somewhat contradictory in itself, but which nonetheless describes their ambiguous position within the movement as well as in a wider context. As Ellen Connant puts it: 'It is difficult to reconcile Yanagi's theories and activities with the movement and artists they spawned.'[1]

This aim necessarily excludes the discussion of Mingei as it is generally understood, that is, the folk crafts of Japan and other areas. The work and the characteristics of the above Mingei craft artists were shaped during the

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1. 'Leach, Hamada, Yanagi: Myth and Reality', *The Studio Potter*, vol.21, no.1, 1992, p.8.

formative years of the Mingei movement. In order to concentrate on this period of the movement and its background, I will limit the scope of my study from the Meiji Restoration (1868) to the Pacific War (1941-45).

At the beginning of this period, concurrent with the radical changes in the country's social, political and economic structures, the concept of *bijutsu* (fine art), as opposed to craft or applied arts, was introduced from the West. It was enforced through various government institutions and was firmly established by the turn of the century among the upper and the newly emerged middle classes who became the patrons of the new category of art and craft products. On the other hand, the government-sponsored domestic industrial expositions provided opportunities for individual craft producers, whether working individually or as an organisation, to show their skills in public, and so win fame. In addition, the establishment of industrial and art schools opened the way for those individuals who were not born into a family of craftspeople, to study art and craft without being apprenticed to private workshops. This allowed them a freedom to develop individual styles and paved the way for the birth of *kojin sakka* (craft artists). During the first decades of this century, a new generation of artists took up traditional craft such as ceramics and prints as a means of artistic expression. This challenged on the one hand the newly established hierarchy which placed craft below art, and on the other the concept of craft as a show

of skills rather than creativity. It also raised the question of the responsibility of the artist in the production: for example, the shaping of the object in ceramics and the blockcutting or printing process in printmaking, which were often done by assistants or other skilled people. The Mingei movement, an aesthetic and creative movement, emerged against this background. The focus on the craft artists place to one side other, perhaps more frequently mentioned aspects of the movement, namely the regional folk craft revivals and the propaganda activities. They will be discussed only in relation to the main subject of the present study.

I am responsible for the translation of all the Japanese material quoted in this thesis except where otherwise indicated.

All Japanese names in this thesis are written in the Japanese order i.e. surname followed by given name.

INTRODUCTION

To date, there have been numerous publications relating in various ways to Mingei. They were written by people both from within the Mingei movement and outside it. As they include a large number of minor publications, only selected works of major significance in relation to the present study will be discussed here. Most of the writing on Yanagi and the Mingei movement dates from the 1970s or later, but publications by outsiders on *mingei* - or folk crafts, as the word is generally understood - had begun to appear before Yanagi's death in 1961. Hugo Munsterberg's *The Folk Arts of Japan*, which strongly reflects Yanagi's ideas on the subject, was published in 1958 with a preface by Yanagi himself.[1]

A short summary on Yanagi and the Mingei movement is included in *Folk Traditions in Japanese Art*, an exhibition catalogue by Victor and Takako Hauge.[2] In the introduction, the authors name three main people who cultivated this folk culture: Yanagida Kunio, Shibusawa Keizô and Yanagi Sôetsu.[3] Their description of Yanagi and his movement is short, but very apt:

> [Yanagi's] approach was basically emotional and intuitive; he proclaimed a system of aesthetic values with prophetic fervor, tieing the beauty of folk

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1. Published by Charles E. Tuttle Company.
2. Published by Kôdansha International in 1978.
3. Victor and Takako Hauge, 'Introduction', Folk Traditions in Japan, Kôdansha International, Tokyo, 1978, p.14.

> crafts to ethical qualities in life and work, equating function with beauty, beauty with labor and collective effort, hoping to convert the craftsmen of his time to a new aesthetic-ethic that was to change the face of the earth and bring about a new 'Kingdom of Beauty'. Yanagi's most significant achievement was the establishment of the Nippon Mingeikan in 1936, which became the best testimony to Yanagi's remarkable aesthetic sensibility as well as to the excellence of Japanese folk art.[4]

While the Hauges succinctly describe the nature, characteristics and objectives of Yanagi's theory, theirs is a minority viewpoint. It is likely that they achieve a balanced view precisely because they do not rely only on Yanagi's writings for their concept or appreciation of folk crafts. Their extensive list of public institutions and private collectors who lent items for the exhibition indicates the breadth of their independent research. In this the Hauges' study is one of the exceptions among the publications on folk crafts; many publications on the subject, both in English and in Japanese, reflect Yanagi's ideas because Yanagi and the Japan Mingei Association were regarded as authoritative in the field.[5] The Hauges' study is, however, of little significance in relation to the present thesis as the Hauges write from the viewpoint of scholars of folk crafts rather than modern Japanese crafts.

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4. Victor and Takako Hauge, 'Introduction', p.15.
5. For example, Muraoka Kageo and Okamura Kichiemon, *Folk Arts and Crafts of Japan*, Weatherhill/Heibonsha, Tokyo/ New York, 1967 (Japanese version) and 1973 (English version); the exhibition catalogue from the Seattle Art Museum in 1983 and *Mingei: Japanese Folk Art*, Universe Books, New York, 1985; and *Mingei :The Living Tradition in Japanese Arts*, Japan Folk Crafts Museum, Tokyo, 1991.

The *Mingei* movement has not generally been regarded as a topic for serious study among art historians. Only craft historians refer to the movement, when discussing the works of those major craft artists who belonged to it - and then only to the extent of associating their works with the Mingei theory as expressed by Yanagi They do not attempt to relate these works to it more systematically.

Japanese Literature

The first major book to be published on Yanagi Sôetsu was Tsurumi Shunsuke's *Yanagi Sôetsu* (1976), a monograph on Yanagi as a philosopher. Tsurumi is a critic who has written scholarly works on other philosophers and examined political thought in modern Japanese history. His book on Yanagi is regarded as a classic study on the founder of the movement and, although Tsurumi does not write about craft or the Mingei movement, he gives an important account of Yanagi's personality and his philosophical background in relation to his later theory on the beauty of crafts.

As a young man, Mizuo Hiroshi acted as Yanagi's secretary and has since been the main theoretician in the Mingei movement. He is now the president of Musashino University of Art where he has taught classical (16th and 17th century) Japanese art as well as Mingei theory. He has edited *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû* (The Complete Works of Yanagi Sôetsu) and published many books on Japanese aesthetics and on the Mingei theory as well as on Japanese art. His

latest book *Hyôden Yanagi Sôetsu* (Yanagi Sôetsu: A Critical Biography) was published in March 1992. To date the book is the most thorough study of Yanagi's philosophical development.

In 1988, Idekawa Naoki, a critic of ceramics, published *Mingei: Riron no Hôkai to Yôshiki no Tanjô* (Mingei: the Fall of the Theory and the Birth of a Style). He exposes the weaknesses of Yanagi's theory and presents him as an incompetent leader of a lost cause. Idekawa is probably one of the first Mingei critics to attempt to critically place the movement in its contemporary context, comparing it with Iwamura Tôru's notion of promoting local crafts, and with Yamamoto Kanae's Farmers' Art Movement in the 1920s. Idekawa does this in order to take aim at the popular belief that the Mingei theory promotes and sanctifies a 'healthy' beauty which was born among the working masses. In his book, Idekawa shows that behind the tone of Yanagi's 'humanistic' writings is an extremely personal relationship between his favourite objects and himself, and rightly claims that for Yanagi beauty was exclusively for his (and his friends') appreciation and enjoyment, and was nothing to do with the humanistic concern for, or true understanding of, the producers of the objects.[6] Thus Idekawa concludes that the Mingei movement is nothing but the creation of a style, not through production but through the act of selecting

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6. *Mingei: Riron-no Hôkai-to Yôshiki-no Tanjô*, Shihchôsha, Tokyo, 1985, pp.41-114.

according to Yanagi's personal aesthetic judgement.

Idekawa's argument has its weaknesses. Firstly, it pays no attention to the production side of the movement. He claims that the failed Kamigamo Mingei Cooperative was the only attempt at craft production, without mentioning the successful practice in Tottori and other local revivals. Secondly, he follows the popular concept that the craft artists within the movement primarily strove to put Yanagi's ideas into practice. The present thesis will argue against this in Chapter Six. While Idekawa exposes the theoretical dilemma underlying crucial concepts of Yanagi's writings and destroys much of the popular mythology surrounding Yanagi and the Mingei movement, he fails to perceive the real nature of the relationship between Yanagi and the Mingei movement. Like most writers on the subject, he sees the movement primarily as Yanagi's creation from the very start. His basic assumption is that Yanagi was the one and only source of the ideas of the movement as well as being its leader. The present thesis was inspired partly by Idekawa's criticisms of the Mingei movement, but it will show in the following chapters that his perception is inadequate concerning many other areas which he fails to explain, or with which he does not deal.

Okamura Kichiemon, a stencil dyeing artist, had experienced difficulties in publishing his *Yanagi Sôetsu-to Shoki Mingei Undô* (Yanagi Sôetsu and the Early Mingei

Movement), which was published in 1991.[7] Okamura takes the view that the term Mingei only refers to those products which satisfies Yanagi's formula of their characteristics. The so-called 'primitive' craft, or the crafts for aristocracy (such as the *bingata* textile which was developed in Okinawa), in his view, do not classify as Mingei, and he gives them separate terms such as 'pre-Mingei' or '*sotsu*-Mingei' respectively. Thus Okamura structures a history of Mingei before and after Yanagi's 'discovery', and places the activities of the Mingei group within the framework.

What is intriguing in his book, perhaps, is his suggestions of the interpersonal frictions within the movement from its early stage. Although Okamura does not fully disclose those incidents, as one of the few remaining people who were closely associated with Yanagi and the pre-war Mingei movement, he provides valuable insight into its core members, particularly the diversity of their opinions. Alongside that of Idekawa's, Okamura's book has been an important source of inspiration for the present study.

Western Literature

Like most of the Japanese writers, Western scholars who

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7. Published by Tamagawa Daigaku Shuppankai, Tokyo. In the postscript, Okamura (born 1916) gives a brief history of revisions of the book until it was at last published. His account hints at some pressure from the Mingei Association regrading the content of the book.

have written about the Mingei movement have so far treated it in isolation. Not surprisingly, perhaps, Western scholars have sought parallels between it and other international craft movements, notably the Arts and Crafts Movement led by William Morris in nineteenth-century England.

In 1980 Brian Moeran, an English social anthropologist, published an article in *Ceramic Review*, in which he claimed that as well as the 'West' learning from the East in art (referring to Japonisme), the East also learned from the West. Drawing out the similarities and differences between Morris's Arts and Crafts Movement and Yanagi's Mingei movement, he concluds that while Morris's movement was an aesthetic one, Yanagi's was spiritual.[8] Moeran expands on this in his 1987 paper presented at the conference Europe & the Orient, Canberra.[9] In it, he again compares Morris and Yanagi and introduces Bernard Leach as a bridge between the two, suggesting that Leach introduced Morris's ideas to Yanagi, first his friend Tomimoto and then directly, after developing a close friendship with Yanagi himself. Moeran points out that Morris and Yanagi grew up when their respective countries were at similar stages of industrialisation, and that they shared similar views on popular art (or art for the

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8. *Ceramic Review*, no.66, 1980, p.26. I think Moeran is referring to the fact that Yanagi eventually developed a theory of Buddhist aesthetics.
9. 'Orientalism and the Debris of Western Civilisation: Popular Art Movements in Britain and Japan', *Europe & the Orient*, D. Gerstle and A. Milner (eds.), The Humanities Research Centre, Canberra, 1994.

people). Their main difference, Moeran says, was in their immediate enemies: Morris's enemy was the division of labour while Yanagi's was individualism. Hence, 'change the nature of society, said Morris; change the nature of the individualism, said Yanagi, if you wish to have beauty in your lives'.[10] This is a fascinating analysis - but it does not offer a historical understanding of the movement.

Elizabeth Frolet, a French artist and art historian, wrote *Yanagi Sôetsu ou les éléments d'une renaissance artistique au Japon* in 1986 after extensive research in Japan. Frolet's whole book is concerned with Yanagi and his movement, but she completely ignores the historical context of the 1920s when the movement emerged, and instead seeks the roots of the movement in more general areas such as Western thought, the tradition of craftsmanship and Buddhism. She sees, for example, the activities of the Shirakaba group as an influence on Yanagi's thought, but she does not go on to consider what *Shirakaba* represented in Japanese society at the time. Frolet also wrote an article for a Mingei exhibition in London in 1991, in which she states that 'it was William Morris who provided Yanagi with the richest material for the development of his Mingei movement.'11 This is certainly an exaggeration. It is true, as Moeran points out, that Yanagi knew of Morris and his movement better than he and his close followers such as Mizuo admit. But

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10. Moeran, 'Popular Art Movement in Britain and Japan', p.9.
11. *Mingei: The Living Tradition in Japanese Arts*, p.13.

Yanagi's reading was far from limited to Morris or Ruskin. As Nakami Shinri has recently established, it extended to the literature of Guild Socialism (particularly Arthur J. Penty) and others (see Chapter Six). It seems that Western scholars' lack of understanding of the social, literary and artistic developments of the period has led to their placing too much emphasis on the influence of Morris and Ruskin on the movement. Any movement involved a sizeable number of people and established its relevance in Japanese society must, I believe, originate largely in certain necessities within the history, culture and society from which it sprang. There are more important areas to be examined in order to establish the characteristics and significance of the movement than seeking its roots in Western influence.

The catalogue of a 1985 exhibition in New York was published in book form with an introduction by Robert Moes. Moes's articles go beyond describing the movement simply as a reaction against industrialisation or as a movement inspired by William Morris.12 Moes observes and rightly emphasises the aesthetic tradition of the tea ceremony at the roots of Yanagi's aesthetic practice:

> The tea masters developed an aesthetic theory explaining that humble utensils and common materials selected for the tea ceremony are far more beautiful, more spiritually profound, and therefore more appropriate, than expensive, elaborate ones...Yanagi Sôetsu's elevation of anonymous folk art to a position above that of great works by famous artists

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12. The book contains two articles by Moes: 'The Appreciation of Folk Craft in Japan' and 'Characteristics of Japanese Folk Art'.

> is surely parallel to the tea ceremony's raising of humble peasant wares to the highest realm of art, and probably could not have happened without it.[13]

But Moes becomes confused when it comes to understanding the relationship between the producers and the 'men of taste' such as the old tea masters and Yanagi. As far as the appreciation of ordinary wares is concerned, there is no basic difference between the tradition of the tea ceremony and the ideals of Mingei. Yet, Moes claims that:

> Japanese folk art is the opposite of the tea ceremony in both its patronage and its basic attitudes. It was the art of the common people rather than of the samurai and merchants. The unself-conscious, naive directness of folk art contrasts with the highly sophisticated refinement of the tea ceremony.[14]

I quote this passage as an example of the prevailing perception underlying many writings on the Mingei theory and movement. In the following chapters, I will show that in its origin the Mingei theory was indeed 'the art of the samurai and merchants' or their modern counterparts, senior public servants, professionals and industrialists, and that 'the unself-conscious, naive directness' of the object was appreciated by the 'highly sophisticated refinement' of Yanagi's aesthetics. The tradition of the tea ceremony, or its aesthetic tradition as *me-kiki*, will be discussed in Chapter Three.

The writings I have discussed so far have treated the movement in social isolation. Generally speaking, the movement's 'counter-industrialisation' and 'aesthetic

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13. 'The Appreciation of Folk Craft in Japan', p.20.
14. 'The Appreciation of Folk Craft in Japan', p.19.

revival' aspects are emphasised largely by Western scholars. Japanese scholars and writers have stressed its 'humane' or 'democratic' outlook. Idekawa's study attempted to destroy this popular concept and succeeded to a large extent.

Japanese craft historians, on the other hand, take a broader view - perhaps because they are forced to see the movement in relation to other craft movements. There are not many writings, however, which offer an extensive view of craft history. Most writings on craft confine themselves to limited areas (ceramics, metalwork etc.) or to a certain period (Meiji, Taishô and so on).

Perhaps the most comprehensive and well illustrated account of modern Japanese craft was written by Suzuki Kenji, a craft historian. Suzuki published the *Kôgei* (Craft) volume of *Genshoku Gendai Nihon Bijutsu* (The Art of Modern Japan in Original Colours) in 1980. It begins with a historical account of the changing concept of the word *kôgei*. This is followed by the development of craft in the Meiji period, including case studies on the state of various crafts. Suzuki gives a comprehensive account of the eventual separation of craft and industrial craft, and the development of a variety of crafts during early Meiji (1870-1880) and late Meiji (1880-1910). In his account after 1910, he writes on a wide range of new movements, including the Farmers' Art Movement led by Yamamoto Kanae. He also makes references to the Mingei

movement and developments in industrial craft design. But although Suzuki's account is extremely informative, he does not analyse the Mingei movement. Instead he hands the task on to Inui Yoshiaki, author of the volume *Tôgei 2* (Ceramic Art 2), published in the same series in 1979. (It seems that the editors and authors of *The Art of Modern Japan* series regard the Mingei movement as primarily a movement in ceramics.)

Inui Yoshiaki is a critic of art and craft, particularly of ceramics, who was associated with Tomimoto Kenkichi in his last years. He devotes his volume to the ceramicists of the Mingei movement and those who worked in abstract styles. In his section on Mingei artists, Inui explains Yanagi's theory on the beauty of craft then narrates the history of the movement as commonly presented: Yanagi's 'discovery' of *mingei*; the establishment of the *Nihon Mingei Kyôkai* (Japan Folkcraft Association) and the Japan Folkcrafts Museum; the publishing of the magazine *Kôgei*; and the development of Yanagi's Buddhist aesthetics. The outline is followed by his analysis of the four major Mingei craft artists - Bernard Leach, Tomimoto Kenkichi, Hamada Shôji and Kawai Kanjirô. A major point lacking in Inui's writing, however, is the logical connection between Yanagi's theory and the practice of the craft artists.

More recently, in 1990, the Saison Museum of Art in Tokyo made a unique attempt to set Yanagi's aesthetics 'in context' with an exhibition entitled *Japanese Aesthetics*

and Sense of Space: Another Aspect of Modern Japanese Design. The exhibition aimed to seek 'Modernism in Japanese style' in the architecture and craft of the period between 1910 and the 1960s. The exhibition presented plans and photographs of Mikuni-sô, an experimental building built for an exhibition in 1928 to commemorate the enthronement of Emperor Shôwa in 1926. Mikuni-sô was a major project for Yanagi, who planned the building together with his friends and decorated it both with old folk crafts he had collected and with new works by the craft artists of the Mingei circle. At the 1990 exhibition, some items which decorated Mikuni-sô were shown side by side with plans and photos of contemporary architecture in Japan (by, for example, Bruno Taut, Frank Lloyd Wright and their Japanese contemporaries) and furniture and crafts(by Tomimoto Kenkichi, Kitaôji Rosanjin and others). The exhibition was an attempt to make living space an issue in art. The Mingei section of the exhibition relates to the movement's creative aspect, and will be discussed in Chapter Six.

The above survey of major studies on Yanagi and the Mingei movement reveals their limitations. They have failed to establish the relationship between Yanagi's theory and the works of the craft artists of the movement. The problem has long been recognised by the members of the movement, yet no satisfactory solution has been presented to them. The issue of the craft artist is particularly important because it eventually led the Japan Mingei Association to

split in 1953. Miyake Tadaichi, an active member of the association, questioned Yanagi over the discrepancy between his theory, which regarded the beauty of crafts made by anonymous craftsmen as supreme, and his practice of promoting the works of his artists such as Hamada or Leach. After some intensive discussions, Yanagi chose to ignore him. As a result, Miyake left the Association and established *Nihon Kôgei Kyôdan* (the Japan Craft Cooperative). He later published his version of the split in the cooperative's magazine *Nihon-no Mingei*.

The limitations of the criticism and analysis of the Mingei movement to date seem to come from the fact that the authors view the movement only through Yanagi's actions and writings, and attempt to understand the whole movement as revolving entirely around his theory. Thus the craft artists of the movement were seen as those who put Yanagi's theory into practice. Because of this, the authors are unable to explain why, for example, Kawai Kanjirô, who was one of Yanagi's closest associates, eventually changed his style after the war to produce works that are strongly 'individualistic' and 'expressive' and without any function, which is precisely opposite to the Mingei ideal.[Figs.1-2] They are also unable to relate some negative comments on Yanagi's theory itself and on the movement made by Yanagi's close associates, notably by Jugaku Bunshô, Mizutani Ryôichi, Tomimoto Kenkichi, Hamada Shôji and Kawai Kanjirô.

When one steps back from the Mingei ideal and looks at the craft artists of the Mingei movement as relatively autonomous individuals, one begins to see the limits of the influence of Yanagi's theory over them. In this thesis, I will approach the movement from two related yet separate aspects: the movement as an aesthetic or appreciation movement (Chapters Four and Five) and as a creative or craft movement (Chapter Six).

In order to understand the Mingei movement as a whole and as realistically as possible, I will deal with related historical issues in the early chapters. Chapter One discusses the development of modern Japanese society, culture and art, during the first decades of this century, from which the modern craft movements emerged. Chapter Two is an analytical survey of the development and changing perceptions of art and craft during the period under discussion. Chapter Three concentrates on issues concerning craft and its modern developments. Chapter Four narrates the history of the Mingei movement from its origins in the studio pottery of Bernard Leach and Tomimoto Kenkichi, and the experience of Hamada Shôji and Kawai Kanjirô as contributors to the formation of Yanagi's Mingei theory. Chapter Five discusses the aesthetic aspect of the Mingei movement in the context set by the previous chapters. Chapter Six deals with the Mingei movement as a modern craft movement, and examines the relationship between Yanagi's Mingei theory and three craft artists of the movement: Kuroda Tatsuaki, Serizawa

Keisuke and Munakata Shikô.

Before opening the discussion, I will provide preliminary definitions of some of the terms I will be using. However, because the thesis involves some changes in the concepts behind these terms, further discussions will be included in the relevant chapter.

Art and Craft Attempts by philosophers, art critics and historians to distinguish between art (or fine art) and craft (or applied art) have so far failed to give any clear distinction between them. The argument that craft can be distinguished from art by its utilitarian or functional character has been used by both Western and Japanese critics[15]. To prove their point, however, they had to go to the extreme of taking examples such as a Renaissance 'masterpiece' painting as fine art and comparing them with blacksmith's work or manufacturing of cars as craft.[16] If one tries to use such characteristics as a work's function or its production process as universally unique to craft, one soon finds difficulties in categorising certain objects. Can one claim that a Renaissance altarpiece is a work of art and an illuminated medieval manuscript a piece of craft, although the former is for education and propaganda and the latter devotional, when both are produced for religious purposes and both

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15. See, for example: Collingwood, *The Principles of Art*, 1938; Yanagi, 'Kogei no Michi', 1927; Okuda Seiichi, *Nihon Kogei-shi Gaisetsu*, 1931 (dates given here are those of original publication).
16. Collingwood,*The Principles of Art*, p. 17.

achieve high aesthetic standards?

My position is that it is impossible to separate art and craft objects in any logical and universal way. I take the view that fine art and craft are both products of human labour.[17] For the purpose of this thesis, I define craft as a category of objects which have been created with craft materials (ceramics, wood, textiles, metal, bamboo and so on) and having one or more functions of varying kinds, including decorative functions, and with or without an aesthetic value.[18] By 'varying kinds of functions', I mean that sometimes objects may serve purposes that were not originally intended by the producer/s, while other objects may hardly serve the function/s for which their shapes suggest. Incidentally, although its development formed part of modern craft in Japan, ceramic sculpture is excluded from the discussion, as it is, like bamboo work, outside the scope of this

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17. Here I agree with scholars such as Wolff (1981) and Hadjinicolau (1978). The latter does not state the point clearly, but by rejecting the use of the word 'art' and choosing to write instead on the 'production of pictures', he seems to make no distinction between art and craft objects.
18. This definition, of course, already overlaps with that of fine art, especially sculpture, as shown in the example of Takamura Kôun in Chapter Two. It seems, however, to serve the present purpose.

study.[19]

The word 'craft' in this thesis will have two separate and distinct meanings: firstly, it is used as defined above, and secondly, as a translation of the Japanese word *kôgei* when referring to, or translating, Japanese texts. When products are mechanically mass-produced, they will be referred to as 'industrial craft' or 'industrial products' as a translation of *sangyô kôgei* or *kôgyô kôgei*.

art/fine art The use of the term 'art' or 'fine art' also varies according to the context, i.e. as a translation of the word *bijutsu* and as the English word with its usual meanings. The Japanese word *bijutsu* was introduced as a translation of the Western terms fine arts, Schöne Künste and Beaux Arts (see Chapter Two). As to the aesthetic value of an object, I largely follow John Passmore's idea of serious art: a product may fail in its

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19. Modern Japanese ceramic sculpture was founded by Numata Kazumasa (1873-1954) who studied sculpture, went to Europe to study techniques of ceramic and sculpture between 1903 and 1906 and again in 1921, studying under Auguste Rodin at one stage. Numata seems to consider that ceramics sculpture belongs to craft rather than sculpture ('Chôkoku-no Tôjiki Kôgeika-ni tsuite [On Turning Sculpture into Ceramics]', *Gendai Nihon-no Tôgei* vol.1, Kôdansha, Tokyo, 1985, p.140.)

function, yet can still be a work of 'serious art'.[20] I also hold that perceived aesthetic values may change with time. At the same time, there seems to be a relatively common agreement over the aesthetic value of a given object among certain people at a given time. The aesthetic value, or a lack of it, is not intrinsic to the object but lies in the perception of the audience. It is from this viewpoint, and not with my personal aesthetic, that I will approach Yanagi's aesthetic perception and evaluation.

craft artist I will use this term to describe a modern artist who took craft as means of artistic expression. The terms 'craftsman' or 'artist-craftsman' are often used by writers on modern craft, but for the purpose of my arguments, those terms seem to be too ambiguous. While the term 'craftsman' was used in Yanagi's book *The Unknown Craftsman* to mean the artisan in the traditional village craft workshop, it is also used today in a modern sense to describe those who work as individual producers[21].

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20. John Passmore, *Serious Art*, Duckworth, London, 1991. The case of Bernard Leach may serve as an appropriate example in relation to the main subject of the thesis. Leach sold a pot to George Eumorfopoulos, a collector of art. Later, Mrs Eumorfopoulos showed Leach the round mark which the porous pot made on her piano. Leach was 'humbled but not put to shame' because the artist in a potter hates to 'give up beauty for the sake of utility' (*Hamada Potter*, Kôdansha, Tokyo, 1990, p.120).
21. In America, a monthly magazine entitled *The Craftsman* was published between 1901 and 1916, by Gustav Stickley, 'as a way of educating the public about his Arts and Crafts philosophy'(Barry Sanders, in the introduction to *The Craftsman: An Anthology*, Peregrine Smith, Santa Barbara & Salt Lake City, 1978, p.vii).

'Artist craftsman', on the other hand, conjures up the image of the producers who joined the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain in the last decades of the nineteenth century.[22] The term 'craft artist' has been derived from 'craft art', the translation of *kôgei bijutsu* which described the modern crafts from the 1920s onwards. It seems to indicate more clearly that the producer is an 'artist' in the modern sense. When referring to the skilled workman who produces craft, I will use the term 'artisan' (the Japanese words for it are *shokunin* or *kôjin*), which does not seem to carry the meaning of 'artist'.

Mingei In the face of the fact that the 1989 edition of *The Oxford Dictionary* includes the word as 'folk art', I will refer to the movement, which is called *mingei undô* in Japanese and has been called the Folkcraft (or Folk Crafts) movement, as the Mingei movement. Names of institutions such as *mingeikan* (the Japan Folkcraft Museum), follow the English term used in its published material (*The Mingei*) as closely as possible.

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22. Edward Lucie-Smith speaks of 'the artist-craftsmen of our own day, who are the heirs of the Arts and Crafts Movement' (*The Story of Craft*, Phaidon, Oxford, 1981, p.15).

CHAPTER ONE

Social and Cultural Trends of the 1910s to 1920s

Modern developments in the social, literary and artistic domains were integral to the formation of the Mingei group and its theories. Crucial among these developments was the concept of individualism in art and literature: while the modern aesthetics advocated by Takamura Kôt rô liberated artistic appreciation from conventional rules and promoted the value of personal perception, the group which published the literary magazine *Shirakaba* introduced a concept of subjective art criticism. Simultaneously, printmaking was also developing as a kind of bridge between art and craft.

1-1. Major social, economic and political changes

Around the time of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), Japan was undergoing an industrial revolution in light industry (mainly in the cotton mills sector). As a result of the Shimonoseki Treaty Japan obtained the colony of Taiwan (although it had to return the Liaotung Peninsula to China after the Triple Intervention of Russia, France and Germany). It also won influence over Korea, and export

markets in Korea and China.[1] The postwar economic boom, helped by a large indemnity from China, was followed by a recession in 1897 and 1898 during which the cotton mill industry was worst hit.[2] But this period between the Sino-Japanese War and the Russo-Japanese War is generally regarded as the time when capitalism developed fully in Japan.[3] On the foreign policy front, the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 gave Japan an opportunity to show its military power internationally. It also deepened the tension with Russia.

On the domestic side, concurrent with the development of industry, the labour movement emerged.[4] In 1897, the number of industrial disputes 'soared to reach thirty-two in the second half of the year, involving 3,517 workers'.[5] With the rising labour movement, the *Rôdô Kumiai Kiseikai* (Labour Union Forming Society) was formed

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1. Kajinishi, Katô, Ôshima and Ôuchi call the Sino-Japanese War a 'reflective' imperialist war; while the Japanese domestic economy had not yet developed enough to necessitate an imperialist war, Japan had to adopt foreign policies in line with the rapidly developing international imperialism in its effort to assert its existence in international politics. (*Nihon Shihonshugi no Hatten I*, Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan-kai, Tokyo, 1973, pp.190-204.)
2. Kajinishi et. al., *Nihon Shihonshugi no Hatten II*, 1973, pp.229-239.
3. The heavy industries were developed rapidly during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904 and 1905.
4. The appalling working conditions of the women in the spinning and milling industries were well known even at the time, but little action was taken by the workers. Early industrial action was led by male workers in the heavy industries such as the shipyards and machinery works. See Kajinishi et. al., *Nihon Shihonshugi no Hatten I*, 1973, pp.119-143.
5. Kajinishi et. al., *Nihon ni okeru Shihonshugi no Hatten I*, p.138.

in 1897 with the aim of educating and organising workers. It increased its membership to 5,700 by the end of 1899.[6]

The government responded with the Public Peace and Police Regulation. This effectively crushed the germ of the union movement,[7] which from then on began to aim at developing political freedom and democracy. In 1900, the *Shakaishugi Kyôkai* (Socialist Association) was formed. Its members founded the Socialist Democratic Party in 1901 but the party was banned on the day it was founded. In 1903 the *Heiminsha* (Common People's Company) was formed as a group of progressive political thinkers which included the members of the Socialist Association. Its leaders included Sakai Toshihiko and Kôtoku Shûsui. These so-called socialist groups consisted of urban intellectuals whose main activity was educating the public rather than organising workers, although they played some important roles during the rising labour movement after the Russo-Japanese War. As intellectuals they had close ties with writers and artists, particularly *dôjin* (members)[8] of the

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6. Kajinishi et. al., *Nihon ni okeru Shihonshugi no Hatten I*, p.138.
7. Kajinishi et. al., *Nihon ni okeru Shihonshugi no Hatten I*, pp.138-40.
8. The Japanese word *dôjin* (also *dônin*) has two meanings: 'the same person' and 'a group of people who share the same objective or aspiration'. The term *dôjin zasshi* (magazine) was derived from the second meaning, referring to magazines published by such groups. Many literature and art magazines mentioned in the text were published as *dôjin zasshi* (e.g. *Hôsun*, *Tsukuhae*, *Shiarakba*, and *Kôgei*) while the publication of other magazines (e.g. *Myôjô*, *Taiyô* and *Kokka*) were more professionally organised. In order to minimise the use of Japanese terms in the text, I use 'member' for *dôjin*.

magazine *Hôsun* (see below on the Creative Print Movement). They provided illustrations and cartoons for Heiminsha's weekly newspaper, the *Heimin Shinbun* (Common People's Newspaper), which became the mouthpiece of the anti-war advocates during the Russo-Japanese War. Its stand added to the pressure from the government, which had repeatedly banned the newspaper for various articles it carried as well as suing it for publishing a translation of *The Communist Manifesto*. The paper finally succmbed to the pressure in 1905.[9]

The Russo-Japanese War concluded with the Treaty of Portsmouth, which secured raw material supplies and markets for Japanese industry but did not include a war indemnity. Since the war was fought with a large foreign debt, the Japanese public was left with inflation and economic hardship. The public dissatisfaction with the Treaty boiled over at a meeting in Hibiya district of Tokyo which turned into a large-scale riot. As a result the government had to bring in the army and impose martial

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9. The position of the socialists and their supporters as progressive urban intellectuals can be observed in various articles in *The Heimin Shinbun*, which also included large advertisements of Mitsui Kimono Store (later Mitsukoshi Kimono Store, then Mitsukoshi Department Store, with an upper middle-class clientele). Kôtoku Shûsui was supported by Koizumi Sakutarô (1872-1937), a businessman who later became a member of the political party Seiyûkai (established by Itô Hirobuimi in 1900). Koizumi was also a close friend of Sakai Toshihiko. Before Kôtoku was arrested in 1910, Koizumi had suggested that Kôtoku retreat from the public life and study history, offering funds for the purpose (Nakamura Fumio, *Taigyaku Jiken to Chishikijin*, 1982, p.238).

law in the area. The government took responsibility for the riot and resigned. A new government was formed under Prime Minister Saionji Kinmochi, a politician with liberal beliefs who adopted relatively lenient policies to allow the socialists a certain freedom.[10] The socialists grasped the opportunity and in 1906 formed the Japan Socialist Party, led by Sakai Toshihiko, as Japan's first officially recognised socialist party.

The Russo-Japanese War in its turn accelerated the growth of Japan's heavy industries. Japan's light industries also grew and, by 1913, Japanese silk exports supplied half of America's total silk consumption.[11] Economic depression recurred after the war, and once again the labour movement surged.[12] Kôtoku Shûsui, on his return from America, began to advocate direct action. His faction within the Socialist Party opposed Sakai Toshihiko and others who insisted on parliamentary reforms. The party rules were changed to reflect radicalism at its general meeting in 1907, and immediately afterwards the government banned the party and its daily newspaper the *Heimin Shinbun*. The banning of the party led its members to split into factions in which the anarchists became increasingly popular. The following year, the large scale

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10. See Appendix 2 for Saionji's biographical notes.
11. Takemura Tamio, *Taishô Bunka*, Kôdansha, Tokyo, 1980, p.44.
12. For example, in 1907, large scale strikes were organised at the Ashio Copper Mines, Horonai Coal Mines and Besshi Copper Mines. The strike at Ashio lasted ten months and the government had to send the army to suppress them.

arrest of socialists known as *Akahata Jiken* (the Red Flag Incident) took place.[13] The Saionji cabinet took responsibility and resigned.

The Red Flag Incident was followed by a mass arrest of socialists in *Taigyaku Jiken* (The Great Treason Case) in 1910. The Great Treason Case is important in the history of literature and art because of its various effects on the intellectuals at the time.[14] Nakamura Fumio points out that around that time the government on the one hand revised the education system to incorporate a stronger

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13. Also called the Kinkikan Incident. When socialists from around Tokyo, some flying a red flag inscribed 'Anarchism and communism', gathered to celebrate the release of Yamaguchi Yoshio from prison, they clashed with the police who tried to take the flag. The police used the occasion to arrest thirteen socialists including Sakai Toshihiko and Ôsugi Sakae (Sakamoto Tarô (ed.), *Nihonshi Shôjiten*, Yamakawa, Tokyo, 1976, p.180).
14. A radical group of four - including Miyashita Takichi who was influenced by Kôtoku Shûsui - planned to assassinate the Emperor. When the plan was detected by the police, the government began to arrest a large number of socialists and anarchists in May and June 1910. Twenty-six were charged over the Great Treason, and Kôtoku Shûsui was charged as the chief conspirator. The Case is today known to have been largely a government set-up. All the court proceedings were carried out in secret. No evidence or witnesses were presented. On 18th January 1911, twenty-four of the accused were sentenced to death while two were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labour for indefinite periods. The following day, however, an Imperial Order was announced and the sentences were reduced: twelve, including the group of four and Kôtoku Shûsui, who had no part in the assassination plan, were given the death sentence, twelve were sentenced to life, one to 10 years and the other 8 years. The executions were carried out within a week despite the custom at that time of giving around 100 days between the verdict and the execution (quoted from Kamisaki Hiroshi, *Taigyaku Jiken*, 1964, in Nakamura Fumio, *Taigyaku Jiken to Chishikijin*, 1982, p.25).

emphasis on Imperial divinity and nationalism, and on the other strengthened literary censorship.[15] Nakamura also points out that the Great Treason Case was immediately followed by Japan's annexation of Korea, which the socialists would have opposed strongly had it not been for the decisive blow they received from the arrests and the mass execution of their members.[16]

One effect of the Case was the tightening of censorship. The arrests had began in May; in August, the reading of socialist literature was strictly prohibited. In September, publications relating to socialism were banned and commercial lending libraries and secondhand bookshops were raided. The number of banned publications soared to 115 in 1910, compared to only fourteen in the previous year.[17]

Despite the damage done to the early Japanese socialist movement by the Great Treason Case, the Taishô era (1911-1926) saw a significant development of democratic ideas. This phenomenon is generally called *Taishô Demokurashii* (the Taishô Democracy). Its driving power came from 'the movement by a wide public - with the middle-order urban population at its core and including workers, farmers and newly emerged capitalists who were not privileged - to

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15. Nakamura Fumio, 1982, p.25. Also see Usuda Noboru, *Ishikawa Takuboku to Taigyaku Jiken*, pp.129-130.
16. Nakamura, *Taigyaku Jiken to Chishikijin*, pp.6 & 286.
17. Nakamura, *Taigyaku Jiken to Chishikijin*, pp.19 & 91.

obtain political freedom.'[18] The term Taishô Democracy embraces various ideas and movements such as the universal suffrage movement, Minobe Tatsukichi's theory of the Emperor as an apparatus, and *Yûaikai* (the Fraternity Society) and the first trade unions.

The First World War brought a postwar economic boom for several years until a severe depression hit Japan in 1920.[19] The chronic depression was aggravated by the Great Kantô Earthquake of 1923, which not only destroyed a large part of Tokyo and paralyzed the economy but was used by the police as an opportunity to suppress any anti-government activities.[20] For instance, to divert any possible civil uprising against the government, the police spread a rumour of attacks by the Koreans, which resulted in mass murders of resident Koreans by the panic-stricken citizens. Also, the prominent anarchist Ôsugi Sakae (1885-1923) and his wife Itô Noe were murdered by a military police captain during the post-earthquake confusion. Many intellectuals, including Yanagi Sôetsu, temporarily left Tokyo after the disaster.

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18. Matsuo Takayoshi, *Taishô Demokurashî no Kenkyû*, Aoki Shoten, Tokyo, 1968, p.1. There are many other books on the Taishô Democracy with emphasis on different aspects.
19. For example, the total of planned capital of various industries increased more than ten times from 250,797,000 yen in 1914 to 2,676,901,000 yen in 1918 (Kajinishi et. al., *Nihon Shihonshugi no Hattatsu III*, 1973, pp.506-7).
20. In the city area of Tokyo, 68,660 people (out of the estimated population of 2,265,300) were claimed as dead or missing after the earthquake and the fires that followed (Jun Ôyane, in Kawai Takeo(ed.), *Kindai Nihon Shakai Chôsashi II*, Keiô Shoten, Tokyo, 1991, p.230).

The universal suffrage law for which the Taishô Democracy had striven was tabled and passed by the Diet in 1925. Also tabled and passed at this time was the *Chian Ijihô* (Public Security Law). This infamous law aimed at controlling 'those who form an organisation for the purpose of changing the national polity or denying private property, or those who join such an organisation with a knowledge of its purposes' (Article 1). Its power was strengthened in 1928 by an Imperial Order which introduced the death penalty. The Public Order Law remained in force until 1945.

The Shôwa era (1926-1989) began with a financial panic which was triggered by a run on a city bank in 1927, then spread around Japan. During the subsequent economic depression, Japan's colonial interests in China were threatened by the advancing Chinese nationalists. The government dealt with the problem by military intervention in China on the one hand and increased suppression of anti-government movements within Japan on the other.[21] In this political climate the Great Depression, which began

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21. At the time three proletarian political parties existed legally, while the Communist Party was outlawed. In the first general election in February 1928, eight candidates from the three parties were elected to the Diet. As a result, the government lost its majority. Less than a month later, the government arrested 1,600 Communist Party members and charged about 900 of them under the Public Peace Regulation. It is known as the *3.15 Jiken* (3.15 Incident). (Kawanishi et. al., *Nihon Shihonshugi no Botsuraku II*, 1970, p.593-598.)

with the crash on Wall Street, spread to Japan. Japan's military expansionism progressed rapidly, particularly after the Mukden Incident in 1931 when the Japanese army in Manchuria set off a railway bomb to destroy a Chinese warlord leader and quickly took control of the area. The outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 led to the Pacific War (1941-45).

The above social and political climate needs to be taken into account when considering the cultural activities at the time, particularly as it set limits to their subject matter and forms of expression.

1-2. New movements in art

Since the introduction of oil painting in the mid-nineteenth century, painting in Japan has been divided into *nihon-ga* (Japanese-style painting) and *yô-ga* (Western-style painting).[22] But when the *Tokyo Bijutsu Gakkô* (Tokyo School of Fine Arts - the second government art school), was established in 1887, oil painting was excluded from the curriculum.[23] Teaching of *yô-ga* and

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22. The terms *yô-ga* and *nihon-ga* will be used in the text because they not only refer to different material and techniques but also have been established as distinct categories of art in Japan.
23. The first government art school was opened in 1876 as the *Kôbu Bijutsu Gakkô* (Art School of the Ministry of Works Technical College) where Western art, including oil painting, was taught. See Appendix 1.

design did not begin at the school until 1896.[24] The year after the school opened, some *yô-ga* artists - such as Asai Chû (1856-1907) and Koyama Shôtarô (1857-1916) who had studied at the Art School of the Ministry of Works Technical College - formed the *Meiji Bijutsukai* (Meiji Fine Arts Society), and most other *yô-ga* artists joined it.[25] Meiji Bijutsukai had a painting school from 1892 to 1896, when it closed due to a conflict between the older members and artists freshly returned from Europe, led by Kuroda Seiki (1866-1924) and Kume Keiichirô (1866-1934). In the same year, Kuroda, Kume and some others who painted in lighter colours and were called '*gaikô-ha* (the outdoor light school)' left Meiji Bijutsukai and formed *Hakubakai* (the White Horse Society). Meiji Bijutsukai itself dissolved in 1901 with the departure for Europe of its major members, such as Asai Chû, but it was essentially re-grouped as *Taiheiyôgakai* (the Pacific *Yô-ga* Society) in the same year. And although the Meiji Bijutsukai school had closed in 1896, its teaching was continued at the *Fudôsha* (House of Difference), Koyama Shôtarô's private painting school, which operated from 1887 to the 1910s.

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24. The first public school of painting was opened in 1880 in Kyoto as the Kyoto School of Painting (Kyôto-fu Gagakkô), with three classes of *nihon-ga* and one class of *yô-ga*. Hashimoto Kizô describes the school in Kyoto as 'a training ground [for students] to achieve a high technical standard' while the Tokyo School of Fine Arts was 'an institution to cultivate artists as Fenollosa and Okakura advocated' (*Kyoto-to Kindai Bijutsu*, Kyoto Shoin, Kyoto, 1983, p.57).
25. On the formation and the activities of Meiji Bijutsukai, see Aoki Shigeru, 'Meiji Bijutsukai-no Katsudô', in Nihon Yôga-Shô Kyôdô Kumiai(ed.), *Nihon Yô-ga Shô-shi*, Bijutsu shuppansha, Tokyo, 1985, p.153.

It was Kuroda and Kume, the leaders of the new school of *yô-ga* painters, who were appointed as the first teachers of *yô-ga* at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts in 1896. Asai himself was not appointed until 1898. As Kuroda and Kume began to teach at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, students from their private painting school moved to the government art school. Thus, the 'rebel' style of the new school quickly established itself in mainstream art. As Ishii Hakutei, who belonged to the 'old' school, cynically commented in 1925, 'the fact that the new returnees [Kuroda, Kume and Iwamura], who were regarded as anti-academic, became the established authority in one way seemed contradictory.'[26] A little later, younger artists from Taiheiyôgakai went to Paris and studied at the Académie Julian under Jean-Paul Laurens (1838-1921).[27] The two schools Taiheiyôgakai and Hakubakai thus existed side by side in the first decade of this century when the first *kanten* (government exhibition) was held in 1907 as *Monbushô Bijutsu Tenrankai* (the Ministry of Education Art

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26. The main artists of this group were: Kanokogi Takeshirô (1874-1941), who spent a total of seven years in Paris between 1901 and 1918; Nakamura Fusetsu (1866-1943, Paris 1901-1905); and Yasui Sôtarô (1888-1955, Paris 1907-14). See *Mizue* vol.247, no.3, p.22.
27. Exhibition catalogue *L'Acadèmie du Japon moderne et les peintres français*, Tokyo Shinbun, Tokyo, 1983, pp.150-1.

Exhibition), known as *Bunten* for short [Figs. 3-4].[28] According to Masaki Naohiko, principal of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts from 1901 to 1932 and one of the main instigators for the establishment of the exhibition, Bunten was created on the model of foreign examples such as the French Salon.[29]

At this time, *nihon-ga* was also divided into new and old schools. A regional grouping of Tokyo-based and Kyoto-based artists added to the complex distribution of power and authority in the art world, and this was immediately reflected in the newly formed government exhibition. But the academicism of the established schools and the favouritism practised by the selectors, who were based in these schools, came to be resented by the new generation of both *nihon-ga* and *yô-ga* artists, now ready to express themselves by experimenting in various new European styles. This new generation of artists and their ideology were to have a profound influence on the development of craft - by allowing craft to be seen as art.

The movement away from the academicism of Bunten was signalled by a series of small Western-style art exhibitions organised by the magazine *Shirakaba* (Silver

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28. See Glossary under *kanten* for the changing names of the exhibition. Until the establishment of the government exhibition, the Domestic Exhibition for the Promotion of Industries and international exhibitions had been the main opportunities for *yô-ga* and *nihon-ga* artists to have their works assessed in public and to win recognition.
29. Quoted in *Nittenshi* vol.1, 1980, p.529.

Birch - see below). The first was held in 1910 as a joint exhibition by Minami Kunzô (1883-1950) and Arishima Ikuma (1882-1974), who had just returned from Europe. The second, held in November 1911, showed the works of more returnees, such as Shirataki Ikunosuke (1873-1960), Minami, and Tomimoto Kenkichi (1886-1963). It also included an English artist, Bernard Leach (1887-1979), as well as other young artists seeking new forms of expression, such as Yamawaki Shintoku (1886-1951), Nakamura Tsune (1887-1924) and Sakamoto Hanjirô (1882-1969). The exhibition included works which had been rejected at the government-sponsored Bunten and advertised the fact, thus making its anti-Bunten stand clear.[30]

The first major anti-Bunten exhibition society was *Fuzankai* (Société du Fusain), formed in 1912 and led by Saitô Yori (1885-1959), Kishida Ryûsei (1891-1929) and Seimiya Hitoshi (1886-1969). It lasted for only two years, holding two exhibitions. It was nevertheless significant in that the exhibitions included a variety of rebellious young painters such as Takamura Kôtarô, Yorozu

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30. Exhibition catalogue *Rondon-no Seishun*, Fukuyama Art Museum, Fukuyama, 1990, p.7. Yanagi Sôetsu and Mushanokôji Saneatsu wrote in the November issue of *Shirakaba*:

> This year's [Bunten] is very boring... It makes us feel like starting a Secession [original word in English] movement... [Our] *yô-ga* exhibition might not have been planned if it was not for this Bunten. We will show a number of works which were rejected by Bunten. It is by no means counter-Bunten, but some people may interpret it as such (*Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû* vol.20, Chikuma Shobô, Tokyo, 1982, p.11).

Tetsugorô (1885-1927) and Kimura Shôhachi (1893-1958), and heralded many other anti-academic movements.[Figs.5-6] It was also a significant event for prints and craft: Bernard Leach and Kobayashi Tokusaburô (1884-1949) showed etchings and woodblock prints, while Fujii Tatsukichi (1881-1964) exhibited an embroidered work.

The year after the second Fusankai exhibition, the *Nikakai* (Second Section Association) was formed by artists who had unsuccessfully lobbied Bunten to set up a second category of *yô-ga* to include new styles. Another major exhibition society following Nikakai was the *Kokuga Sôsaku Kyôkai* (Society for Creating National Painting) established in 1918 by young Kyôto *nihon-ga* artists who were dissatisfied with the selection process of Bunten. Although Kokuga Sôsaku Kyôkai was originally formed as a *nihon-ga* society, it eventually became a major exhibition society for *yô-ga*, craft art and prints, from 1926, 1928 and 1931 respectively.[31] Both its craft and print sections became a major exhibition ground for the craft artists and the artists of the Creative Print Movement to promote crafts and prints as works of art.

1-3. Iwamura Tôru and *Bijutsu Shinpô*

A major source of information for young artists and art students hungry for the latest developments in art during

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31. In 1928, its *nihon-ga* section was dissolved and the *yô-ga* section re-established itself as Kokugakai as a public exhibition society for painting, sculpture and craft sections. A print section was added in 1931. See Glossary.

the first two decades of this century was *Bijutsu Shinpô* (1902-20). *Bijutsu Shinpô* was a weekly art newspaper, whose chief editor was Iwamura Tôru, another significant associate of Hakubakai. Iwamura, a son of a baron and brother of Tatsuno Kingo (architect), had met Kuroda and Kume in Paris, and began to teach Western art history at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. When Hakubakai established an art school in 1898 to teach oil painting, art theory and art history, Iwamura was one of the main lecturers. Some of the lectures were published and they proved popular.[32] But he is perhaps better known as the art critic who introduced the teachings of John Ruskin and William Morris to the Japanese public through *Bijutsu Shinpô*.[33] Its price was kept very low, ensuring that it reached its target readers and was widely read by young students of art as virtually the only publication of its kind.

The contribution of *Bijutsu Shinpô* to the modern development of craft was its ideological stand: it applied the same aesthetic to fine art, prints, book design and crafts. It discussed craft from a modern critical viewpoint, that is, seeing craft as creative art, an idea which was just taking shape. It also promoted new developments such as *Gorakukai*, an association of early craft artists, and dismissed the 'art craft' of the Meiji

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32. Nakamura Giichi, *Kindai Nihon Bijutsu-no Sokumen*, p.10.
33. For the introduction of Ruskin to Japan, see Appendix 2.

period as an attempt to attach pictures to the surface of craftworks rather than treat their shape and pattern as an integrated whole.[34] It published writings on various crafts, providing fresh views which were free from both technical and utilitarian preoccupations. It was also in *Bijutsu Shinpô* that Tomimoto Kenkichi published many thought-provoking articles: a long article introducing William Morris as a designer; articles on chairs and interior design; and his thoughts on ceramics, which inspired young artists who had never thought that one could approach craft as creative art.

In 1912, Gahôsha, the publisher of *Bijutsu Shinpô*, also published a small booklet by Iwamura: *The art students in Paris and two other essays on art.*[35] In 'The art students in Paris', Iwamura described the culture of young artists in Paris and how they gathered at cafés to discuss and exchange views on art. The writing inspired many young artists and writers and their enthusiasm later led to the formation of the Pan Society, an anti-naturalist bohemian group of young writers and artists from *Myôjô* and *Hôsun*, in 1908.

1-4. Literature and art

Literary trends before *Shirakaba*

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34. For example, Maeda Kenjirô 'Meiji Jidai-no Kôgei Bijutsuhin-ni tsuite', no.6, 1912, p.39.
35. The date of publication of this pamphlet seems to vary. I took the date from the index volume of the reprint of *Bijutsu Shinpô*, Yagi Shoten, Tokyo, 1985, p.289.

The Meiji *Bunmei Kaika* (Civilisation and Enlightenment) in literature began with the importation of Western thoughts and ideas through translations of Western literature, initially emphasising such practical theories as Samuel Smiles' *Self-Help*.[36] The new beginning in Japanese literature was heralded by *Ukigumo* (Floating Clouds) by Futabatei Shimei, published in 1887, in which the author attempted to unify the written and spoken languages.[37] Various literary experiments were made by different writers in search of a subject and style. Authors began to depict the lives of ordinary people in the new social environment. Foreign literature seems to have provided inspiration across different genres and generations of Japanese literature. Kunikida Doppo, for example, quotes Futabatei's translation of Turgenev in his famous essay 'Musashino' (first published in 1898), in which he challenges the traditional Japanese appreciation of nature by praising the wooded countryside around Tokyo. The Japanese writers were eclectic in their choices from Western literature, just as the artists were in selecting from Western art.

An important development towards aestheticism in literature took place around the turn of the century.

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36. For the history of modern Japanese literature, see Endô and Ikegaki, *Chûkai Nihon Bungaku-shi* (The Annotated History of Japanese Literature), Chûô Tosho Shuppan, Kyoto, 1969, pp.100-162.
37. Futabatei Shimei (1864-1909), who translated many works of Turgenev, studied Russian at the Tokyo University of Foreign Languages. He went to Russia in 1908 and died on his return to Japan.

Writing on modern art, Takashina Shûji points out that Takayama Chogyû (critic, 1871-1902), who in the 1880s and 1890s had advocated harmony between the individual and society, changed his position completely when he published '*Bi-teki Seikatsu-ni tsuite* (On Aesthetic Life)' in the magazine *Taiyô* in 1901. In the article, Takayama states that the highest value lies not in ethics or reason but only in the aesthetic life which satisfies natural human desires.[38]

In literature and art, this new trend emerged as romanticism. The stages of the romanticist movement are evident in the magazines *Bungakukai* (Literary World, 1893-98), *Myôjô* (The Daystar, 1900-08 and 1921-27) and *Subaru* (Pleiades, 1909-13), which set the stage for both literary and art criticism.[39]

Myôjô was published by *Shinshisha* (the New Poetry Company), founded by Yosano Tekkan, who is now regarded as the leader of romanticism in Japanese poetry. As well as literature, these magazines often included articles on Western art. Another major trend in poetry was led by Masaoka Shiki (poet, 1867-1902), who opposed Yosano with his realist style and published *Hototogisu* (Little

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38. *Nihon Kindai-no Biishiki*, Sôdosha, Tokyo, 1986, pp.341-346.
39. When referring to *Myôjô* in the following, I will be referring only to the first *Myôjô*, which bears some importance in the context of Japanese romanticism in literature and art.

Cuckoo), beginning in 1897.[40]

Through *Myôjô*, Shinshisha published novels, poetry and art criticism. During its lifetime, the magazine enjoyed a considerable influence on young intellectuals, creating a salon, so to speak, consisting of some prominent literary personalities of the time, including the colossal figure of Mori Ôgai.[41] It also attracted younger artist-writers such as Ishii Hakutei and Takamura Kôtarô.[42] Yosano Tekkan's wife Akiko was also a well-known poet. Other members of Shinshisha who are relevant here are: Ishikawa Takuboku (1885-1912), journalist and poet; Kitahara Hakushû (1885-1942); and Kinoshita Mokutarô (Ôta Masao, 1885-1945), dermatologist and novelist. In 1908 Kinoshita, Kitahara and five others left Shinshisha and soon afterwards the magazine *Myôjô* ended.[43] The following year, however, another magazine - *Subaru* (1909-1913) - started with virtually identical members and contributors.

Naturalism in literature began around 1900 and was at its peak in 1906-9 with Shimazaki Tôson's *Hakai* (Broken

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40. Shiki considered *Manyôshu*, which was edited in the eighth century as the oldest anthology of poems in Japan, to be above any later poetry in quality. 'Realist' may not be the precise description of Shiki's poetry, but it will serve here to contrast his style to Yosano Tekkan's.
41. See Appendix 2 for Mori Ôgai.
42. See Appendix 2 for Ishii Hakutei and Takamura Kôtarô.
43. The departure of the seven members seems due to a series of personal conflicts rather than to any difference in literary positions. See Yabuta Yoshio, *Hyôden Kitahara Hakushû*, Tamagawa Daigaku Shuppanbu, Tokyo, 1978, pp.68-9.

Commandment, 1906). Its aim was: 'to describe reality as it is, rather than describing it through conventional aesthetics. It tried to probe into the lives of people in the post-Russo-Japanese War realities.'[44] The hero of a naturalist novel 'seeks to exit such reality without succeeding in it, and often ends by meeting a tragic fate without achieving his ideal.'[45]

Myôjô embraced both romanticist and naturalist trends. Shimazaki Tôson (1872-1943) and Ishikawa Takuboku, both members of Shinshisha, moved more towards naturalism while Kinoshita Mokutarô led an anti-naturalist camp. Kinoshita and others formed an aesthetic literary group and published *Mita Bungaku* in 1910. Kinoshita was the major instigator of *Pan-no Kai* (Pam Society), a bohemian merry-making group which brought young artists and writers together (see below).

The naturalists were led by Shimamura Hôgetsu (critic and playwright, 1871-1918) and published a magazine, *Waseda Bungaku* (Waseda University Literature, 1891-98 and 1906-27). Scholars point out that while Shimamura advocated naturalism, he preferred romanticist art such as the Pre-Raphaelites' style.[46] Thus *Waseda Bungaku* had closer ties with the artists of Hakubakai (the new school), who had

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44. Hiraoka Toshio 'Nichiro sensôgo-no bungaku' in Ochi et.al., *Nihon-no Kindai Bungaku: Meiji and Taishô Periods*, Nihon Hôsô Shuppan Kyôkai, Tokyo, 1976, p.227.
45. Hiraoka, p.227.
46. For example, see Nakamura Giichi, *Kindai Nihon Bijutsu-no Sokumen*, pp.152-183.

strong romanticist trends, than with Taiheiyôgakai (the old school), whose style tended to be realistic.

One crucial development in literature which had a profound effect on art, craft and art criticism was individualism or the preoccupation with 'self'. The pioneers of this ideal were Ishikawa Takuboku and Takamura Kôtarô. Takuboku and Kôtarô were rivals in the 'new-style' poetry. Takuboku is now best known for his *waka* (thirty-one-syllable poetry) and Kôtarô for his free-style poems. Takuboku's poetry is characterised by its deep and objective insight into himself. The most famous collection of poems, '*Ichiaku-no suna*' (A handful of sand), begins with a section entitled '*Ware-o aisuru uta*' (Songs of love for myself), which opens with a famous poem:

> In the eastern sea
> On the shore of a small island
> In the white sand -
> With tears washing my face
> I play with a crab.

Yabuno Mukujû, a self-confessed traditionalist poet who wrote in the original 1910 foreword of this collection:

> For my part, I had always understood that poetry uses the human mind as inspiration to show tricks with words, so I am shocked to find that poems like these, which are so straightforward yet can convince everyone, have been invented today.[47]

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47. Ishikawa Takuboku, *Ichiaku-no suna; Kanashiki Gangu*, Shinchôsha, Tokyo, 1990 (first published in 1952), pp.11-12.

Takamura Kôtarô had his eyes opened to free-style poetry through modern French poets while he was in France. Like Takuboku's thirty-one-syllable poetry, Kôtarô's poems gaze into his own mind and judge it, not by conventional morality, but by profound belief in his own being. This is the same belief that is evident in his essays on art.

Interaction between literature and art

The years around the thirtieth year of Meiji (1897) seem to have been a turning-point in the interaction between art and literature. Nakamura Giichi notes that while Japanese art magazines before this period focused mostly on Asian art, after it they began to specialise in Western art.[48] Sadoya Shigenobu points out that from around this time, Hakubakai's influence began to appear in book design, a development he believes was triggered by the interests the Japanese writers showed in Western art.[49]

Apart from its other innovations in literature and art, the magazine *Myôjô* is known for introducing Art Nouveau widely into Japan. Its first cover designs in the Art Nouveau style were by Nagahara Kôtarô, but the artist who was best known in this context was Fujishima Takeji (1867-1843), a Hakubakai artist. Fujishima began designing for the magazine in 1901 while teaching oil painting at the

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48. Nakamura Giichi, *Kindai Nihon Bijutsu-no sokumen*, pp.9-11.
49. Sadoya Shigenobu, *Sôseki-to Seikimatsu Geijutsu*, Bijutsu Kôronsha, Tokyo, 1982, p.71.

Tokyo School of Fine Arts. He also made a series of designs for Yosano Tekkan and Yosano Akiko.[Fig.7]

After *Myôjô* had introduced Art Nouveau, Masaoka Shiki's *Hototogisu* also adopted a modern European style. Masaoka's taste in art had changed from *nihon-ga* to *yô-ga* after he met Asai Chû, who had been to Paris in 1900 when Art Nouveau was at its peak. At Shiki's request, Asai sent cover designs with a fresh European flavour from Paris; they first appeared in *Hototogisu* in 1901. On his return to Japan in 1902, Asai taught European-style industrial craft design in Kyoto (see Chapter Two). Shiki died later that year.

One of the close associates of *Hototogisu* was Natsume Sôseki, who is regarded as the father of modern Japanese literature. Sôseki went to London in 1900 and returned two years later, soon after Shiki's death. Sôseki's connection with a young Hakubakai painter, Hashiguchi Goyô - Hashiguchi's brother, a diplomat, was a friend of Sôseki's - eventually led Hashiguchi to draw designs for *Hototogisu*. In 1905, Natsume Sôseki published the first part of *Wagahai-wa Neko-de aru* (I am a Cat) in *Hototogisu*. Hashiguchi illustrated the second part, published in February. His illustrations pleased Sôseki and so he continued to ask him to design his books.[Fig.8] Hashiguchi also provided designs for Mori Ôgai. Both Natsume Sôseki and Mori Ôgai had a significant influence on art as critics and advisers more or less independent

from any particular group.

Myôjô contained many woodblock reproductions of paintings by both Japanese and foreign artists. Yosano Tekkan was said to be eager to obtain good quality reproductions for the magazine and was particularly fond of an eccentric woodblock cutter, Igami Bonkotsu (1875-1933), who was skilled in reproducing the subtle qualities of oil and watercolour paintings.[50] So it was not by accident that Ishii Hakutei published Yamamoto Kanae's first so-called 'creative print' (see below in the section on printmaking) in *Myôjô*. Ishii Hakutei was also an oil and watercolour painter, although he later came to be better known as an art critic and historian. Hakutei and his younger brother Tsuruzô (1887-1973) had studied painting at Koyama Shôtarô's Fudôsha, and Tsuruzô later came to be well known as the illustrator of *Dai-Bosatsu Tôge*, a newspaper serial.

In 1905, the Ishii brothers, Yamamoto, Kosugi, Hirafuku, Kanokogi, Ishikawa Kin'ichirô and Morita Tsunetomo began to publish *Heitan* (Flatness), a literary and art magazine. Running to five issues, it lasted less than a year, but in 1907 it virtually reappeared as *Hôsun*, the first magazine of creative printmaking, published initially by three former members of *Heitan* - Ishii, Yamamoto and Morita. Eventually there were nine members (*dôjin*) including some

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50. The first attempt to describe Igami in full is an article by Iwakiri Shin'ichirô in *Fûshin*, vol.1, no.11, Fûshin-no Kai, Tokyo, 1988, pp.11-13.

of the other *Heitan* artists. They were made up of both *yô-ga* artists from the 'old' school and *nihon-ga* artists, and most of them illustrated for at least one of the *Chûô Shinbun* or *Heimin Shinbun* newspapers or *Tokyo Puck* magazine. Interestingly, only two (Yamamoto and Morita) studied at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts (Ishii attended but did not complete the course), and they were not in the certified course but in *senshûka* (a kind of intensive diploma course).

The style of *Hôsun* was a mixture of romanticism and naturalism: while the illustrations were naturalistic and often depicted ordinary working people, the front cover design was usually romantic and in the style of the Pre-Raphaelites, which was very popular among the romanticists.[Figs.9-11] Young writers for *Myôjô* also contributed articles to *Hôsun*. Among them, three are important in the present context: Kinoshita Mokutarô, Kitahara Hakushû and Takamura Kôtarô. Kinoshita, was considered as the strongest opponent of naturalism. Through the Pan Society connection, Hakushû had Ishii Hakutei design his first book - a collection of poetry, *Jashûmon*, published in 1909. Its blocks were cut by Yamamoto Kanae who had trained as engraver. Takamura Kôtarô, the third contributor, actively engaged in wide activities ranging from painting, sculpture, art criticism and poetry to translating (see below).

The year 1910 became a watershed for many aspects of

culture. In April, *Shirakaba* began publication; the first of the series of arrests of socialists and anarchists, to be known by the public as the Great Treason Case, began in May; following this, censorship was tightened; Korea was colonised; and the Pan Society broke up.

Socialism as cultural trend

The ideology of socialism had a wide influence on the literature and art of this period. As mentioned earlier, the socialist groups consisted of urban intellectuals. To read and discuss socialism, Marx or dialectical materialism was part of the culture of young intellectuals, even though they often had to hide to do so.[51] Takehisa Yumeji, one of the most popular artists of the Taishô period, was an illustrator for the socialist *Heimin Shinbun* and was closely associated with some socialists although he was not a socialist himself.[52]

Apart from Takehisa Yumeji, cartoon artists for the *Heimin Shinbun* included Hirafuku Hyakusui, Ogawa Usen, Tobari

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51. *The Communist Manifesto* first appeared in Japanese in 1904. But *Das Kapital* was not translated until after the Second World War.
52. Kamichika Ichiko (1888-1981 activist of women's rights and politician) who used to frequent Yumeji's house was the one who reported the news of the execution of Kôtoku and others to Yumeji. Among others who were also at his house was the young Onchi Kôshirô (book designer and printmaker 1891-1955). Yumeji conducted a wake with his younger friends that night. Tanaka Seikô, *Tsukuhae-no Gaka tachi*, Chikuma Shobô, Tokyo, 1990, p. 17. Also Nakamura Fumio, *Taigyaku Jiken-to Chishikijin*, pp.218-9.

Kogan and Kosugi Misei. In 1901 Hirafuku, a *nihon-ga* painter, and other artists formed the *Museikai* (Voiceless Society), which aimed at developing naturalism in painting. Hirafuku expressed their general sentiment when he said:

> I am fond of modern, everyday life, and therefore seek my motifs in it. I do not consciously choose working people, but they tend to attract my attention because they are everywhere. I am more interested in their active modern life than in people who just sit around elegantly.[53]

Yamamoto Kanae and Morita Tsunetomo were regular contributors of cartoons for *Tokyo Puck*, a satirical magazine which stood by the conservative middle class.[54]

The writers of the *Shirakaba* group were also familiar with socialism. Their senior associate Arishima Takeo is said to have held a socialism study group at home when he was living in Hokkaidô in 1908.[55] Shiga Naoya, one of the major writers for the magazine, regularly visited Uchimura Kanzô, then well-known as a Christian socialist, for seven years between 1900 and 1908.[56] Mushanokôji Saneatsu, the principal writer of *Shirakaba* and son of a viscount, eagerly read the writings of Kôtoku Shûsui and the *Heimin*

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53. Naramoto Tatsuya et. al. (eds.), *Zusetsu Shomin Seikatsushi 8*, Kawaide Shobô Shinsha, Tokyo, 1962, p.131.
54. While *Tokyo Puck* criticised the autocratic government and sympathised with the ordinary people, it held conservative position in more progressive issues such as women's movement.
55. Honda Shûgo in *Nihon-no Bungaku 20: Mushanokôji Saneatsu*, Chûôkôronsha, Tokyo, 1965, p.505.
56. See for example the chronology in *Nihon-no Bungaku 21: Shiga Naoya* 1, Chûôkôronsha, Tokyo, 1964, pp.498-500.

Shinbun.[57] Mushanokôji's social idealism, a likely result of socialist influence, was later put into practice as *Atarashiki Mura* (New Village), a settlement built initially in Kyûshû in 1918 and later moved to Iruma, Saitama prefecture, where it still continues. Funds were raised from the sale of Mushanokôji's own house, royalties and various donations, including some from his friends. The New Village was built as a utopia where people could live, without money, by contributing work for given hours.[58]

Arishima Takeo also attempted to practise his egalitarian ideals. As the son of a wealthy businessman, Arishima inherited the family property. He decided to give it away to the farmers, leaving them in charge of the land. The attempt was crushed by the local government, however. It was not long afterwards that Arishima committed a double suicide with his lover in his holiday house.

These utopian experiments should be seen in the context of the wider social ideals of the time. Like those of

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57. Mushanokôji claims: 'Having read socialist literature, I was not satisfied with it and went to Tolstoy. I think Tolstoy had graduated from socialism and reached his own philosophy...I read *Heimin Shinbun*, but I was not impressed by its ideology, although I was impressed with its anti-war philosophy.' (*Nihon-no Bungaku 20: Mushanokôji Saneatsu*, Supplement, p. 5.)
58. When a certain sum of money was obtained by the village, the villagers would determine its use. It was decided, however, that if for instance only seventy percent of the residents agreed to a particular use, only seventy percent of the sum would be spent, so that the views of the minority would be respected.

Mushanokôji and Arishima Yamamoto Kanae's efforts in the Farmers' Art Movement and Miyazawa Kenji's similar attempt also aimed at bettering the lives of village farmers whose working and living conditions were extremely oppressive. Yamamoto was inspired by the reforms he had seen in Russia while travelling back to Japan from Europe in 1916, and in 1920 he established a farmers' art centre in Nagano prefecture in 1920.

It seems that Socialism was seen as something akin to individualism by the generation which grew up after the Russo-Japanese War when Japanese capitalism had been fully established. It was a generation that did not know the concept of 'harmony between the individual and society' advocated by Takayama Chogyû in the late nineteenth century. The time had also changed: As often quoted, Ishikawa Takuboku described the people's morale as 'suffocated': the younger generation could see no future while the old generation had been exhausted from the efforts in building a modern Japan.[59] In the society which the government exercised strict thought control to maintain imperialist ideology and morality, individualism in any form was bound to clash with the social systems in one way or another. One may assume, therefore, that some members of the privileged class perceived socialism more

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59. For example, see Banno Junji, *Taikei Nihon-no Rekishi: Kindai Nihon-no Shuppatsu*, Shôgakukan, Tokyo, 1993, pp.381-2.

as a cultural than social ideal.[60]

While the writers, artists and intellectuals from the privileged social groups (families of landowners, government officials, successful businessmen and aristocrats) perceived socialism more or less as a cultural ideal, Ishikawa Takuboku saw it differently. Throughout his short life, he was never free from extreme poverty. One of his famous poems reads:

> I work
> And work, yet I still struggle for survival.
> I stare at my hands.

Because of his hardship and his employment as a newspaper proofreader, which provided him with information kept hidden from the public, Ishikawa could perceive the dark side of the social reality better than his fellow writers. He thus saw the nature of the Great Treason Case and wrote two articles criticising the government for the conspiracy against the innocent socialists.[61] It was probably a combination of this political awareness and his own poverty that drew Ishikawa to socialism. However, he died soon afterwards at twenty-six years of age, in 1912.

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60. Tanaka Seikô suggests that what Onchi Kôshirô - one of the most respected leaders of the Creative Print Movement - called 'vicious force of society' or 'erroneous restrictions of the state', which he held throughout his life, may have related to his exposure to the suppression of the early socialists (*Tsukuhae-no Gaka tachi*, p.201).
61. They were '*Jidai Heisoku-no Genjô*' (The Suffocating Situation of the Era) and '*Nihon Museifushugisha Inbô Jiken Keika oyobi Futai Genshô*' (The Case of Anarchist Conspiracy in Japan and the Incidental Phenomena). He completed the latter on the night of the execution of Kôtoku and others.

Intellectuals appear to have responded to the Great Treason Case either by avoiding involvement or by passive support for the unfortunate victims, if they happened to know them. An example of the latter is the support Yosano Tekkan and Akiko gave Nishimura Isaku, a socialist and architect whose uncle Ôishi Seinosuke was executed for treason. They cooperated with Nishimura in establishing the *Bunka Gakuen* (Culture School) in 1921.[62]

If the artists and writers of the trend-setting magazines fell short of taking the socialist ideology on to the streets, they at least shared an awareness of and sympathy for ordinary working people. This cultural climate was an important background to the formation and reception of the Mingei theory.

Exoticism and nostalgia

Like socialism, exoticism and nostalgia were also influential in setting artistic trends during the second decade of this century. The artists of the *Hôsun* group shared a passion for *ukiyo-e* prints. Ishii Hakutei and Oda Kazuma were particularly known for studying *ukiyo-e*

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62. Nakamura Fukio, *Taigyaku Jiken-to Chishikijin*, pp.166-7.

and publishing books and articles about them.[63] Ishii in fact published a series of modern *ukiyo-e* entitled *Twelve views of Tokyo*, in which the traditional subject of *geisha* (female attendants-entertainers of the teahouse) was placed in a contemporary context. The blocks were cut by Igami Bonkotsu, a member of Shinshisha and the Pan Society. It may seem contradictory that Ishii, the father of the Creative Print Movement which insisted on the principle that the artist should conduct the whole process of printmaking himself, should happily draw designs in the *ukiyo-e* tradition and let others cut his blocks and print his work. The apparent contradiction can be explained in two ways. Firstly, as will seen later in this chapter, the print artists' preoccupation with the rule that the artist did every stage of the production of the print was largely a result of the appearance of *Shin Hanga* (New Print) in 1914. Shin Hanga was seen as a threat by the Creative Print artists, who feared that its traditional production system would negate their effort to obtain recognition of prints as works of art in their own right. The earlier creative printmakers, like Ishii Hakutei, were little concerned about such definitions.

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63. Oda Kazuma published a book on Hokusai in 1926 from Kitahara Tetsuo's *Arusu* (Latin *Ars*) publishers. Earlier publications include Iijima Kyoshin, *Katsushika Hokusai-den*, 1893; Ôta Saburô, 'Mukashi-no Hanga-ka' (Printmakers of the past), a series of three articles in *Bijutsu Shinpô*, 1912 (Ôta Saburô - 1884-1969 - was a *yô-ga* painter); Watanabe Shôzaburô, a publisher of the New Prints, published an exhibition catalogue of the works of Hiroshige, commemorating the 60th anniversary of the artist's death, in 1917.

The second key can be found in the writings of Kinoshita Mokutarô. Looking back at the days of the Pan Society, Mokutarô wrote that the art of *ukiyo*-e prints and the music and theatre of the Edo period had been an exotic culture for them and that they had seen *ukiyo*-e through the eyes of the Impressionist painters or via the writings of foreign writers.[64] The point is of great importance for understanding the young urban intellectuals' attitude towards the past. Exoticism or *ikoku jôcho* was a major element of the culture of the Pan Society: its artists and writers attempted to create their version of the artistic culture of Paris as they saw (or imagined) it. The society also served as a forum in which those who had had a taste of foreign culture could share it with those who were ready to absorb it. By appreciating the popular culture of the Edo period from the Western viewpoint, the young intellectuals identified themselves with the 'advanced culture' of the West on the one hand, and reconciled themselves with their own tradition on the other. Furthermore, this re-evaluation of a part of their own culture from which they were separated by time, was extended to the culture of rural Japan, which was separated from them by space. As a result, interest in regional culture and ordinary products for everyday use began to attract the critical eye of the urban

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64. Okada, *Nihon-no Seikimatsu*, p.234. Goncourt's *Utamaro*, for example, was published in 1891 in French and the Japanese translation was published in 1929. The translator, Noguchi Yonejirô (or Yone Noguchi and father of the sculptor Isamu Noguchi), was a poet and critic of art and literature. He published his own *Utamaro*, in English, in 1924.

intellectuals around this time (see Chapter Three).

Nostalgia was another form of the re-appreciation of Japan by young writers and artists. Their longing for the simplicity of the past, for a nature that had been lost, or for close-to-nature rural life, reflected the urbanisation which, by the end of the Russo-Japanese War, was firmly established in Tokyo and the Osaka-Kyoto areas. As Okada Takahiko points out, this nostalgic 'old Japanism' was not traditionalism nor nationalism.[65] It was a phenomenon among the urban intellectuals who considered themselves as 'modern Japanese' armed with Western ideas, and who began to see their own past as 'other'.

Exoticism and nostalgia are perhaps best observed in Takehisa Yumeji's designs and Kitahara Hakushû's poetry. Yumeji (1884-1934) was the first and most popular illustrator of the Taishô culture, with his paintings and drawings of languid women who were sometimes combined with Western men.[Figs.12-13] He opened a stationery shop selling items with his mass-produced designs. Kitahara Hakushû wrote many poems that appealed, and still appeal, to the nostalgic tastes of the Japanese public.

1-5. Takamura Kôtarô and 'A Green Sun'

The most influential idea in the formation of the modern

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65. Okada, *Nihon-no Seikimatsu*, p.237.

concept of craft after 1910 was the concept of modern art as experienced and interpreted by Japanese artists. In this context, perhaps the single most significant figure was Takamura Kôtarô (1883-1965). Takamura was one of the pioneers of modern sculpture in Japan.[Fig.14] He also made significant contributions to modern poetry with a simple and direct expression which he learned from modern French poetry. He advocated modern art criticism, a genre which he himself had forged while abroad. Lastly, he supported some new artists and craft artists by providing a venue - *Rôkandô* (also written Grotta Azzurra), the first art gallery in Japan - to exhibit and sell their work, in 1910. Unlike his younger brother Toyochika, one of the leaders of modern craft movements, Kôtarô exerted his influence indirectly, through art criticism and by pursuing his own art and literature. Although he wrote in magazines such as *Myôjô*, *Shirakaba* and *Subaru*, it was always as an outside contributor.[66] Possibly his outside status resulted from the gulf between himself and those who lacked the crucial first-hand experience of the culture of the West and so had not experienced the trauma of attempting to reconcile the two cultures within themselves. It was this trauma that Kôtarô later described in his famous poem:

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66. Kôtarô writes on his involvement in some artist groups such as the Fuzankai and Seikatsusha, associating with Kishida Ryûsei, Kimura Shôhachi and Seimiya Hitoshi. He adds, however, 'but in all of these instances I was not in the core of the movement but a kind of collateral existence.' ('Kaisôki', 1944, in *Takamura Kôtarô Senshûi*, vol.5, p.309.)

There is no path before me
A path is being trodden behind me
O! Nature
My Father
My all-embracing Father who made me stand alone
Keep your eyes on me and protect me
Always fill me with your adamant spirit
For this long Road
For this long Road
(*Dôtei*)

If Yoshimoto Takaaki is right in saying 'when culture is seen from its creative aspect, the problem of the transplanting of the Western culture manifests itself as the spiritual drama of the individual',[67] a brief examination of such a drama, how it took place within a significant individual and how it was perceived by others around him, will be worthwhile.

Takamura Kôtarô was born in 1882 in downtown Tokyo as the eldest son of Takamura Kôun. As Yoshimoto points out, the career of his father Kôun and the relationship between the father and son is crucial in understanding Kôtarô and his work. Kôun was an accomplished master *busshi*: he could work through every stage of the carving process, which was usually divided between different carvers who each specialised in only one stage. Kôun distinguished himself further from other *busshi* and became a sculptor by moving away from conventional stylisation and, inspired by Western art, by consciously working from natural objects,

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67. Yoshimoto Takaaki 'Nidai-no kaiko-ni tsuite', in Takamura Kôtarô, *Takamura Kôtarô Senshû* vol.5, pp.320-1.

thus expanding his subject matter.[68] He began to submit work to exhibitions, which were the only opportunities for craft producers to win recognition. When the cultural tide turned from Westernisation to nationalism and the Tokyo School of Fine Arts was established in 1889 under the initiative of men such as Okakura Tenshin, Kôun was persuaded to teach as a professor of sculpture.[Fig.15] He was awarded the title of the *Teishitsu Gigeiin* (Master Craftsman of the Imperial House) in 1890.

As the eldest son of Takamura Kôun, Kôtarô, as well as others around him, expected to follow in his father's footsteps. He was given a set of carving knives by his father when he was seven or eight.[69] The fact that Kôtarô had learned all the skills and concepts from his father is important when considering the depth and the extent of his later development. Not that Kôtarô was alone in his experience of growing from a traditional artisan into an artist. It was rather the collective experience, or fate, as it were, of the progressive artisans of the time. What was unique to Takamura Kôtarô was the quality of his absorption in and reaction to Western culture, which Yoshimoto calls a 'life experience', and which later made him a modern artist and a prominent critic of modern art

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68. Takamura Kôun, 'Kôun Kaikodan', quoted in Yoshimoto Takaaki 'Nidai-no kaiko-ni tsuite', pp.326.
69. 'Kaisôki', p.301. Although in his earlier article 'My Childhood'(1942) he remembers being given knives by his father when he was over ten years old (Takamura Kôtarô Senshû vol.5, p.66), I quoted from *Kaisôki* as he is generally more specific in this later memoir.

critic of modern art in Japan. In this struggle to find solutions for himself and others, he was alone.

Kôun, who was aware of his own limited schooling and lack of skill in drawing, encouraged his son to absorb the best knowledge available. So Kôtarô studied sculpture at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. Though he graduated in 1902, he was not satisfied with the conventional teaching of the sculpture course, so he re-enrolled in the oil painting course in 1905. Iwamura Tôru thought Kôtarô was wasting his time in the course, and persuaded Kôun to send Kôtarô to Europe.[70] Kôun paid the travelling and living expenses, which Kôtarô supplemented by working as an assistant to a sculptor and going to art school at night.[71]

Kôtarô stayed in New York for fifteen months before becoming a Japanese government-sponsored student, which enabled him to go and live in London and Paris. During his stay in London he met Bernard Leach, who was also studying drawing at the London School of Art. Kôtarô's experience in Europe has been closely studied by Yoshimoto Takaaki in his *Takamura Kôtarô*. Here, Yoshimoto's point on the impact of Western culture on an individual such as Kôtarô can be stressed.[72]

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70. 'Kaisôki', p.307.
71. Kitagawa Taichi, in *Takamura Kôtarô Senshû* vol.1, pp.362-4.
72. See *Takamura Kôtarô* (Shunjûsha, 1977) and 'Nidai-no kaiko-ni tsuite', in Takamura Kôtarô, *Takamura Kôtarô Senshûi* vol.5.

> The experience that the [prominent] early intellectuals underwent, when exposed to the contemporary Western writings, objects or knowledge, as somewhat similar to that of a transgressor who saw what one should not see. If one has not seen it, one need not concern oneself with it. But having seen it, one is unable to forget it. A kind of original sin has been attached to the individual and where there is original sin, there is the commandment.[73]

What Yoshimoto calls 'the commandment' is a self-imposed isolation of spirit. In another text, he quotes Kôtarô's description of the concept, 'the value of a secret'.[74] It is a determination to keep entirely to himself what he had gained from the trauma of his complex bicultural experience. The despair is expressed in a collection of short essays entitled 'A bundle of letters that were not sent', letters he wrote while in France. One of them says:

> 'To me the white race is an insoluble mystery. I cannot understand even the fine movements of their fingers...The ocean fish must not enter the river, the river fish must not enter the ocean... I want to go home and rub our hearts to one another. How lonely I am!'[75]

'As much as I want to go home,' he writes in another letter, 'I am worried about the loneliness I would feel when I return... I have nowhere to rest under the sun.'[76] In Paris, he went through various intense experiences: he struggled to come to terms with a racial inferiority complex towards Western people; his spirit was exalted when he discovered modern European art; he became painfully aware of the 'backward' condition of art in

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73. 'Nidai-no kaiko-ni tsuite', p.321.
74. *Takamura Kôtarô*, pp.16-8.
75. *Takamura Kôtarô Senshû* vol.1, p.135.
76. *Takamura Kôtarô Senshû* vol.1, p.136.

Japan. All of these things forced him to re-evaluate his relationship with his father, both in the family context and in art. In addition, he had to decide his own future course. His father, on meeting Kôtarô at Kôbe when his ship docked in 1909, suggested that he start a sculpture business in conjunction with Kôun's disciples. This was an enormous shock to Kôtarô. The concept of a business of making statues was almost sacrilegious to him. While his father had turned carving into sculpture, Kôtarô returned to Japan as a modern artist to whom art was an individual pursuit that was never to be compromised. Yet, as the prospective successor of Takamura Kôun, he was surrounded by the politics of the art world. He turned his back on them and began criticising the works even of those who were close to his father, to an extent that eventually Kôun cautioned him and he stopped writing criticism altogether.[77]

Although Kôtarô stopped his blunt criticism of contemporary art, his writings on art continued to inspire young artists and students. One of his major contributions in this respect was his articles on and translations of Auguste Rodin.[78] It must be stressed, however, that what is important here is not the significance of Rodin in Western art, but how Takamura

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77. Quoted in Yoshimoto, *Takamura Kôtarô*, p.27.
78. Later, Kôtarô changed his attitude towards Rodin and his work (see for example 'kinkyô' published in 1923, in *Takamura Kôtarô Senshû* vol.3, p.227), but a discussion of this point is outside the scope of this thesis.

Kôtarô related himself and his art to Rodin and his work, and how his interpretation in turn influenced the progressive modern artists in Japan. Kôtarô published the first part of his translation of Rodin in 1916 with a preface of his own:

> As a sculptor, I am very happy to introduce these words of Rodin to the Japanese public. I hope this book will be read by as many people as possible. Anyone who thinks seriously about life, yet has not read these words, is missing out on one of the greatest pleasures. How much my own life today owes to Rodin! At present, I cannot be over-influenced by him. I want to be influenced as much as I can. I consider it happy. I consider it right. I have been saved by Rodin and encouraged by him, and I still am... Although his words are simple, the further I follow them, they lead me even further. The unfathomable simplicity. That is what I am aiming to achieve... Rodin is a sculptor. However, because he always 'thinks' the fundamentals, his philosophy and creativity constantly spring from his broad humanity, not just from being a sculptor or a painter. They are an enormous gift from Nature to all humanity.[79]

Clearly Kôtarô is projecting his image of 'the ideal artist' on Rodin. Because he perceived sculpture as his natural profession and considered it 'fundamentally, a view of the world', Rodin the ideal artist became Rodin the ideal human being.[80] He challenged the contemporary Japanese art world in which works of art were judged largely by technical expertise, with the message that what is important in art is what is expressed, as well as how it is expressed. He refused to allow his works to be judged by other artists, displaying them only at group exhibitions or by invitation.

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79. *Takamura Kôtarô Senshû* vol.2, p.269.
80. 'On the Seven Arts' (1932), *Takamura Kôtarô Senshû* vol.3, 1967, p.319.

Kôtarô's earliest art criticism had appeared in January 1910 with a review of the third Bunten. In the review, he wrote off virtually all the works on display except those by Ogiwara Morie, who had studied under Rodin in France and whose views on sculpture Kôtarô shared.[81] Takamura wrote that Ogiwara's work had 'la vie'. The review was followed by another article published the next month entitled 'AB HOC ET AB HAC' in which he discussed Yamawaki Shintoku's painting *Morning at a Station* and his thoughts on local colour. In the article Kôtarô defended the painting for its 'honesty' against criticisms made by Ishii Hakutei (see below).

These two articles preceded Kôtarô's 'A Green Sun', which was published in April. The opening passage of 'A Green Sun' is significant:

> People are often entangled by surprisingly trivial matters.
>
> The so-called *nihon-ga* painters are entangled in the name of *nihon-ga*. The so-called *yôga-ka* are entangled in carrying the oil painting on their backs... Unnecessary confusion and dangerous abuse of SONDE are heavy tariffs taxed on all artists at such a time.[82]

The concept of 'local colour', according to Kôtarô, is one of the tariffs which binds the artist and prevents him, for example, from painting the sun green when he sees it

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81. Ogiwara Morie died in 1910 at the age of thirty-six. His sculpture entitled *Woman*, from which a bronze was cast by Kôtarô's brother Toyochika and his friend Yamamoto Azumi, is now regarded as a landmark of modern sculpture in Japan.
82. 'A Green Sun', *Takamura Kôtarô Senshû* vol.1, p.217.

as green.83 He thus attacked the convention, which he perceive to exist, that the painter should use only what were considered to be 'Japanese colours'. 'I am born Japanese,' he says, 'As a fish cannot live out of water, where I am, there is a Japanese man.' There is therefore no point, he says, in making a conscious effort to paint so-called 'Japanese colours'.[84] Kôtarô held that an artist had to exert him/herself in a work as fully as possible, and, if he/she did so, there should be no such question as choosing 'local colours' over other colours.

> I want the artist to forget being Japanese. I want him to shake off the idea of copying Japanese nature, and to use the canvas to express nature as he sees it, freely, indulgently and selfishly.[85]

Here, as Yoshimoto observes, there is a change of tone from Kôtarô's earlier despair. Here he presents himself as a confident advocate of individualism in art. Having experienced the impenetrable wall between the cultures of the West and Japan, Kôtarô struggled both to develop his own art and to bring a modern content into Japanese art. To him, arguments such as 'one should paint in colours that were specifically Japanese' were superficial.

Kôtarô's concept of art as individual expression inspired many craft artists-to-be, and he supported the New Craft Movement and its craft artists both directly and indirectly; Rôkandô provided them with a venue for

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83. Kôtarô defines the use of 'local colour' here as the characteristic natural colours of a particular region.
84. *Takamura Kôtarô Senshû* vol.1, p.218.
85. *Takamura Kôtarô Senshû* vol.1, p.221.

exhibitions and acted as a selling agent at a time when their works had very few outlets. Another important aspect of his contribution was his strong influence on Toyochika, his younger brother, who became one of the leaders of the New Craft Movement (see Chapter Three).

1-6. The new art criticism of *Shirakaba*

Two significant debates took place around this time; the first between Takamura Kôtarô and Ishii Hakutei, and the second between Kinoshita Mokutarô and Mushanokôji Saneatsu. Others were involved, but these four were the main participants. The contrasting standpoints of what may be called here the pre-1910 camp (Ishii Hakutei and Kinoshita Mokutarô) and the post-1910 camp can be observed in the debates, which both revolved around the work of the young painter Yamawaki Shintoku.[86] Yamawaki had adopted an 'Impressionistic' style and while the pre-1910 camp criticised it, the post-1910 camp basically defended it. But it was their respective concepts of art and life, rather than Yamawaki's painting, that were the participants' main concern. In the first debate, Takamura Kôtarô passionately insisted that a work of art should have what he called 'Life' or 'la vie' while Ishii claimed that so-called 'life' can be observed in any work of art, that art criticism should be more objective and that

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86. Both debates are documented and analysed in detail in Nakamura Giichi's *Nihon Kindai Bijutsu Ronsôshi*, Kyûryûdô, Tokyo, 1981, pp.151-174, and *Zoku Nihon Kindai Bijutsu Ronsôshi*, Kyûryûdô, Tokyo, 1982, pp.79-103 respectively.

Kôtarô's subjectivism would not lead anywhere. The second debate was staged in the magazine *Shirakaba* soon after it began publication. While Mokutarô, who shared a rationalist approach to art with Ishii, held that painting should follow its own objective rules of painting, Mushanokôji rejected this, insisting that the artist's subjectivity was all that counted in art. Mushanokôji's attitude typified the standpoint of the Shirakaba group. It amounted to self-worship, as is easily seen in Yanagi Sôetsu's writings on craft, in which Yanagi has absolute confidence in his own perception of beauty of the objects.

The Shirakaba group was a closely associated group of young men from privileged families. The core members were made up of three groups around three group publications (*dôjin zasshi*) at the Gakushûin High School (the Peers' School). Most of the members went on to the Tokyo Imperial University. They were committed to making the magazine one of both art and literature, but its members included only one artist whilst the rest were writers.[87] *Shirakaba* contributed to art by three main methods: it included the best reproductions they could obtain at the time showing mainly Western painting, sculpture and prints; it introduced Western artists from various countries and periods through reviews and translations;

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87. The artist was Arishima Mibuma (who later changed his name to Arishima Ikuma). He was a younger brother of Arishima Takeo (1878-1923), novelist, and an older brother of Satomi Ton (1888-1983), a writer and etcher. Although a non-member, Minami Kunzô regularly contributed cuts and front cover designs to the magazine.

and it organised exhibitions in Tokyo and Kyoto. These exhibitions were the first attempts in Japan to display Western art in originals and reproductions for public viewing in one venue. They attracted audiences eager to see Western art, possibly even originals: the 20th issue of *Shirakaba* (December 1911) records that Takehisa Yumeji, the illustrator/painter, was at the entrance twenty minutes before the opening. Original prints were obtained through catalogues from Maruzen, then the main importers of Western books. At times they succeeded in obtaining originals directly from three artists: Vögeler, Max Klinger and Auguste Rodin.

But perhaps the most significant function that the Shirakaba group played in the context discussed by this thesis was the fact that, through all these activities, and particularly by their passionate and self-centred views on art, they brought Western art into young people's hearts, in a way that was quite different from any previous magazine. The manner in which the group wrote about the artists has been discussed by many scholars.[88] Nakamura Giichi's analysis is particularly relevant in the present context:

> The characteristic of the group's praise of genius and worship of the West is that they continued to discover new objects of their praise and worship and introduced them one after another. By this very fact, that is, the discovery of fresh ideals, *Shirakaba* could at least become the propagator of new artistic trends and, by that fact, they negated the

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88. See for example Honda Shûgo's argument and Takashina Shûji's revision of it (Takashina, *Nihon Kindai-no Biishiki*, pp.327-9).

old, conventional thoughts.[89]

With their thirst for the new, the Shirakaba group dug into the rich reserve of Western art from the Middle Ages to Van Gogh, introducing various periods and styles with equal passion but without historical context or a critical attitude.[90] In so doing, as seen in Mushanokôji's debate with Kinoshita, they admitted their bias and made no apology for it. At the end of his article 'Rodan to Jinsei (Rodin and Life)' in the special Rodin issue of *Shirakaba*, Mushanokôji Saneatsu wrote:

> I have written about Rodin as he lives within me, which may well be different from Rodin himself, Rodin as he lives within Rodin himself, or Rodin as he lives within other people. I hope to be forgiven for that as a necessity.[91]

What made it possible for them to indulge in such amateurish criticism was the nature of the group. The writers of *Shirakaba* did not need to make a living out of writing. They were well educated in foreign languages and had the money to buy expensive foreign books and

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89. Nakamura, *Kindai Nihon Bijutsu-no Sokumen*, p.139.
90. *Shirakaba* was best known for introducing Post-Impressionist art, but recent studies on the activities of the group have began to emphasise the richness of their interest and try to analyse the gradual shift in it. See Takashina Shûji, *Nihon Kindai-no Bi-ishiki*; Nakamura Giichi, *Nihon Kindai Bijutsu-no Sokumen*.
91. *Shirakaba*, vol,1, no.8, p.79.

magazines.[92]

Furthermore, they were emotionally close to one another.[93] In the editorial note of the magazine, one often finds the expression 'I think we are very fortunate to have good and close friends' in different words by different writers. As often quoted, they shared their almost childish delight when they received letters or original works from foreign artists such as Klinger or Rodin, or 'discovered' some Western artist in a catalogue they had newly obtained. These instances are intimately recorded in the section '*Henshûshitsu-yori*' (From the Editing Room) section of the magazine.

One can read a sense of security in their admission of subjectivity and arrogance. Their attitude was 'We do not care what others think because we know that this is what we think.' This sense of security, or mutual support, was

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92. The social position of the group can be illustrated with the example of Shiga Naoya, who is considered the group's representative novelist. Shiga was born in a family the origin of which can be traced back to the lord of a castle near Kyoto. Naoya's father worked for a bank, then held various positions in a government department, at Tokyo Imperial University and with private companies, and emerged as a successful businessman. Shiga writes again and again in a number of autobiographical novels about his struggle - between his desire for freedom from his father's control and his inability to earn a living for himself. His first income from writing was for *Ôtsu Junkichi*, an autobiographical short story, for which he received 100 yen from Chûôkôronsha in 1912, when he was twenty-nine.

93. Yanagi Sôetsu, Shiga Naoya and Mushanokôji all lived in Abiko from 1916 to 1918. Mushanokôji left Abiko in 1918 to establish the New Village. Early in 1923, Shiga moved to Kyoto where Yanagi joined him the following year, after the Great Kantô Earthquake in September.

their strength, and it was confirmed and extended outside the group when, to the surprise of the group itself the magazine proved extremely popular. Clearly, *Shirakaba* offered what many young people wanted: a break from the past, confidence in one's personal feelings and, in one way, an escape from reality.

Humanistic egalitarianism and desire for justice, the limits imposed on them by the social reality, and reconciliation (or compromise) between the two, seem the most important themes of the *Shirakaba* writers. The sensation of freedom and the peace of mind the hero achieves at the point of reconciliation, either with other humans or with his surroundings, is a strong undercurrent in *Shirakaba* novels. The authors internalised the social problems that surrounded them. Their naivety is apparent in the fact, for example, that only several months after the accused of the Great Treason Case were executed, Mushanokôji Saneatsu asked, 'Is there any country that allows as much freedom to the individual mind as Japan does?'[94]

The tendency of the Shirakaba members to turn historic and social issues into personal ones can also be seen in their writings on art. Van Gogh, Cezanne, Rodin, Leonardo, and many other artists were hailed by them as heroes who 'expressed themselves', rather than for the quality of their art or their achievements in history. A main

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94. *Shirakaba* vol.2. no.7, 1911, p.128.

strength of their arguments, as Nakamura Giichi pointed out, was that they were the first, or at least among the first, to write about these figures. Another strength was that, by the very nature of their argument, they had no need to prove themselves to anyone but themselves. They were happy to be ignored by their opponents. The result was a new relationship between literature and art, which Nakamura summarises as follows:

> Through Klinger, the Post-Impressionists and so on..., they only spoke of themselves. The writing on art in *Shirakaba* took the form of introduction or transfer of art [from the West to Japan], but it was neither introduction nor transfer in the precise sense of the word, even less an acceptance of the style. It was literature.[95]

Thus the Shirakaba group created a new tradition of art criticism which was to be carried to the 1920s, and into Yanagi's Mingei theory. The *Shirakaba* authors selected aspects of Western art almost arbitrarily, according to their taste, and wrote about them. Their attitude towards the artists was one of blind worship, rather than critical appraisal of the significance of their work; what was most important for them was to express their belief in the artist's personality. A few quotations from the magazine will illustrate this characteristic:

> If I tried to find a German person who would equal Goethe, Beethoven or Wagner, I would first name

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95. Nakamura, *Kindai Nihon Bijutsu-no Sokumen*, p.143.

Klinger. (Mushanokôji Saneatsu)[96]

> If one can declare there is no philosophy in [Maurice] Denis's life, one can also say there's no philosophy in his work, either. Of course, his work does not discuss philosophy. Yet, I cannot help feeling the strong existence of the philosophy of life underneath his noble, charming and clear impression. (Saitô Yori)[97]

> Personality is the basis of a character... Everything must be woven into the character. For example, Gogh's [sic] art is amazingly well-woven into his character... We are not influenced by them through education. We only feel sympathy with the character. That gives us strength and pride more than anything, because we believe that the very fact we feel a fundamental sympathy with those first-class people is a proof that we have in ourselves an international nature similar to theirs. (Nagayo Yoshirô)[98]

> I worship Rodin because I want to develop myself... I do not believe there are many people who know how to live in the true sense as Rodin does. He is... one who is loyal to his self in the deepest sense. (Mushanokôji Saneatsu)[99]

As Takashina points out:

> The images of Klinger or Rodin as perceived by the people of *Shirakaba* were very specific in that they were formed, fostered and completed in the minds of those people. Through many reproductions and a few originals of their art, they [the *Shirakaba* group] saw images of their ideal artist in these Western

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96. *Shirakaba*, vol.2, no.5, p.101. The description of Klinger as 'the most prominent person in Germany' has often been quoted to represent the group's childish attitude towards its 'heroes' (see for example, Takashina, *Nihon Kindai-no Biishiki*, p.368). To be fair, this quotation may not be as representative as it is often claimed to be. The expression is found in the article reporting the excitement of the group when a postcard from Klinger arrived at Kojima's house. Mushanokôji, who was eager to share the excitement with his mother, told her that Kojima received a postcard from 'the most prominent person in Germany', to which he only received the unsatisfactory reply 'That's good' (vol.2, no.5, p.101).
97. *Shirakaba* vol.4, no.7, 1913, p.120.
98. *Shirakaba* vol.4, no.10, 1913, pp.3-4.
99. 'Rodan-to Jinsei' (Rodin and Life), *Shirakaba*, vol.1, no.8, 1910, p.73.

artists.[100]

The same thing can be said of Yanagi Sôetsu's monumental 1914 work on William Blake, a chapter of which was originally published in *Shirakaba* earlier in the same year. In answer to a published criticism on Blake, Yanagi wrote:

> As you mentioned in your article on my book, nowhere in my book did I mean to introduce Blake in an objective manner (except his biographical facts). I wrote about myself who attempted to live through him... My Blake is Blake as he is within me. How could I write about Blake as he is within other people? I received the same criticism as yours from many others. I know that the criticism is right. However, it does not disgrace me. My work would achieve its aim if I successfully conveyed Blake as he is within me to others.[101]

Takamura Kôtarô stayed outside the *Shirakaba* circle, remaining an occasional contributor as he also did with *Myôjô, Subaru* and *Bijutsu Shinpô*. Although Takamura shared the group's belief in individual expression, his attitude on art was different from theirs. The difference illustrates the nature of the *Shirakaba* aesthetics.

Takamura Kôtarô and Tomimoto Kenkichi (see Chapter Three), perhaps the strongest advocates in Japan of modernism in craft and art, were both individuals who worked in a traditional medium but confronted conventions in order to make a decisive break from them. Although Takamura Kôtarô and Tomimoto Kenkichi both gained their direct inspiration

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100. Takashina Shûji, *Nihon Kindai-no Biishiki*, 1986, p.336.
101. 'Ware-no Bureeku-ron ni tsuite' (1915), *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.4, 1981, p.627.

while they studied in the West, their roles were not a passive transmission of ideas as in the case of many other older painters. They both fought a fierce and lonely battle against conventional ideas and practice within, as well as around, themselves. It was only then that they managed to turn the medium into a modern form of art, and were able to show the way to those who followed them. A strong sense of continuity with the past can be observed in their thoughts and works.

In Kôtarô's case, he had to face the painful recognition of Western superiority in art and culture of his own, and try to reconcile himself to the fact before he could play the role of the catalyst of modernism in Japan. Kôtarô described this sentiment in his poem *The Cathedral in Hard Rain*, written in 1921. In this poem, a young Japanese man stands in front of Nôtre Dame Cathedral in Paris during a storm. Looking up at the cathedral, he is painfully aware that he is a stranger in the land (i.e. in the culture that produced the cathedral), yet speaks with love and awe to the cathedral with an artist's conviction that he is communicating with the cathedral, a work of art.

A similarly passionate appreciation of Western art can be observed in many articles in *Shirakaba*. The *Shirakaba* articles, however, lack the pathos of the young man in Kôtarô's poem. While the magazine contributed to the development of modern art in Japan, it has been pointed out by various scholars that there was no sense of history

in their approach to Western art. Their choice of subjects was eclectic, constantly searching for new material to introduce. Their appreciation, too, was more like a religious fever than art criticism. Thus they felt 'an almost religious elation' over copies of Cezanne's paintings. As Takashina Shûji observed from the artistic debate between Yamawaki Shintoku and Kinoshita Mokutarô, the *Shirakaba* group detached itself from history and saw the object as an absolute, rather than seeing it as relative in a historical context.[102] Similarly, while Kôtarô's admiration for Rodin was based on his own knowledge and experience in sculpture, when the *Shirakaba* group took up the subject it turned Rodin into a virtual object of worship. Incidentally, Tomimoto saw Maillol's work in Paris. Its 'soft and round moulding' inspired him to want to make 'a special jar using thick and soft white porcelain glaze'.[103] Yamamoto Shigeo, the acting director of the Tomimoto Kenkichi Memorial Museum, claims that Tomimoto felt Maillol had surpassed Rodin, which was why he was rather disdainful of the Shirakaba group's predilection for Rodin.[Fig.16][104]

The ahistorical worship of Western art and artists by the

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102. Takashina Shûji, *Nihon Kindai-no Biishiki*, p.371.
103. 'Tôgi Kansô Ni-hen' (Two ideas on ceramics, 1947), in *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, Satsuki Shobô, Tokyo, 1981, p.604.
104. Mr Yamamoto indicated that the magazine virtually ingored Tomimoto's exhibition activities while reporting on other artists' exhibitions. Although Tomimoto once drew the front cover design for *Shirakaba*, there seem to be few other records of interactions between them.

Shirakaba group, was, perhaps, partly due to the fact that the group members included only one artist, and that none of its core members had experienced what Kôtarô had - alienation from the Western art as well as union with it. The Shirakaba members shared only the latter. When they claimed that they were 'the children of the world',[105] they happily omitted the trauma of alienation which some intellectuals such as Kôtarô and Natsume Sôseki had experienced in Europe, and which made the two men the so-called fathers of modern art and literature.[106]

Similarly, the concept of individualism in *Shirakaba*, which had an enormous influence on the young generation, was rather the self-asserting exercise of a spoiled child than a maturing process into self-realisation. As Takashina argues:

> The strength of the *Shirakaba* people, who took the aphorism 'to express oneself' as an absolute command, was that they had no doubt as to the content of the 'self'. Perhaps with the sole exception of Arishima Takeo, the *Shirakaba* group considered 'self' to be asserted unconditionally. It was their sacred flag, so to speak, which was the basis for all their activities, including artistic activities. However, because it was sacred, no examination or analysis was given to its nature.[107]

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105. Mushanokôji, *Shirakaba*, vol.2, no.9, p.162.
106. Natsume Sôseki, often called the father of the modern novel in Japan, was sent to London by the government for two years between 1900 and 1903. See Hirakawa Sukehiro *Natsume Sôseki: Hi-seiyô no Kutô*, Shinchôsha, Tokyo, 1976 and *Wakon Yôsai-no Keifu*, Kawaide Shobô Shinsha, Tokyo, 1972. Also Yoshimoto, 'Shizen-no Ichi' *Takamura Kôtarô Senshû* vol.2, 1967, pp.367-381; and 'Hôkai-no Yôshiki-ni tsuite', *Takamura Kôtarô Senshû* vol.4, 1967, pp.344-355.
107. Takashina Shûji, *Nihon Kindai-no Biishiki*, pp.354-5.

Takashina continues that the 'self-expression' or 'individualism' hailed by the Shirakaba group was not independence from, but reliance on, other people. This meant that they could assert their individuality only when they were noted by others and were opposed. This is well illustrated by their comments in the '*Henshû-shitsu yori*' (From the Editing Room), later called '*Rokugô zakki*' (Miscellaneous Notes Printed in no.6 Type), which was the most popular column in the magazine. The repeated message by the members, particularly by Mushanokôji Saneatsu, is 'whatever others say, I will go my own way' and 'I am very fortunate to have such a close circle of friends'. The logic behind them is that: 'I have an absolute trust in myself. And I have friends around me to share my thoughts. Any opposition from outside us will only prove my reason for existence.'

Shirakaba was primarily a literary magazine, and, when the writers of *Shirakaba* wrote on art, their 'art criticism' was in fact literature in which they were very strong. Their self-worshipping attitude allowed them to write whatever they felt, regardless of the objective validity of their opinion. In this way, while the magazine opened the window to Western art for many young people and encouraged them to be true to their own perceptions, it discouraged them from recognising any historical or artistic continuity with their own past. This *Shirakaba*-style logic was extensively used in Yanagi's Mingei theory.

1-7. Modern developments in printmaking

A close parallel can be drawn between modern developments in printmaking and those in craft. In both fields, it was artists, mostly painters, who initiated the view that the medium was a means of artistic expression rather than as an exhibition of skills in copying the given design. Thus, the early print artists of the Creative Print Movement were mostly painters with the exceptin of Oda Kazuma. Bernard Leach produced etchings and provided a woodcut for the front cover of *Shirakaba*; Tomimoto Kenkichi produced and exhibited a number of prints in the early 1910s; Minami Kunzô, Tomimoto's friend and painter, was the first artist to hold a solo print exhibition in 1911 at Rôkandô; and Takehisa Yumeji's popularity was supported by the fact that his images were widely available in prints.

Printmaking up to around 1900

Modern printmaking in Japan went through similar stages of development to those of craft. The woodblock print industry had been highly developed at the time of the Meiji Restoration, but changing demands called for new techniques and methods. A variety of printing techniques made possible mass production of high-quality images, and artists discovered the distinct 'nature of plate' as a means of expression. But like the craft artists, the

print artists too had to fight for their medium to be recognised as art in its own right.

At the time of the Meiji Restoration, the highly developed *ukiyo-e* (woodblock prints) had dominated the printmaking industry. But the world of courtesans, kabuki actors and chivalry was no longer dominant.[108] Until about 1880, woodblock prints depicted the changing social and cultural environment - Western steamboats and the manners and customs of the foreigners who were based in the reserve in Yokohama, as well as civil wars and other political events (although the government quickly put a ban on prints describing recent political events as the prints often expressed sympathy towards the opposition). Different styles developed within the established *ukiyo-e* style to depict changing perceptions: Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839-1892), for example, adopted *nihon-ga*-style composition in multi-sheet production so that the whole work could only be viewed in its complete form, as a diptych, triptych and so on, whereas in older compositions each sheet could be viewed by itself. Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847-1915), another *ukiyo-e* master of the Meiji period who also studied Western painting, is known for his Western-style prints (*yôfû hanga*) in which he depicted a fresh sense of air, light and shade.[Fig.17] He worked for different

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108. For the historical developments of Japanese prints after Meiji, see: Julia Meech-Pekarik, *The World of the Meiji Print: Impressions of a New Civilization*, Weatherhill, New York, 1986; Helen Merritt, *Modern Japanese Woodblock Prints: the Early Years*, University of Hawaii Press, Honolulu, 1990.

hanmoto (publishers) including Matsuki Heikichi, who published prints and other products, initially for export. Some of Kiyochika's prints have English titles, indicating that they were aimed at the overseas market.[109]

The woodblock print tradition was so powerful that it was seen as a major obstacle by artists who worked in other print mediums: Nishida Takeo (1894-1961), one of the modern printmakers who taught himself etching and published the magazine *Etching* from 1932, lamented the lack of recognition of his medium. He wrote in the first issue of the magazine that 'ordinary printmakers are mesmerised by the glory of the past and will not take today's printmaking seriously.'[110] In his recent study, John Clark establishes that copperplate printmaking has been largely overlooked by historians, who only mentioned in passing Shiba Kôkan (1738/47-1818) and Aôdô Denzen (1748-1822). He shows that it was in fact widely practised between the 1830s and the 1880s, with subjects ranging from the scientific to maps and souvenirs.[111] The durable nature of copperplate printing also made it the first method to be employed by the Imperial Paper Currency Bureau. The Bureau hired Matsuda Rokuzan or Gengendô II (1837-1903), the son of an established Kyoto printer, in

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109. Tsuji Tadao, 'Kobayashi Kiyochika' in S. Sasaki and T. Sakai (eds.) *Kindai Nihon Bijutsutshi I*, Yûhikaku, 1977. p.152.
110. Extract in *Nihon Kindai Dôhanga-ten*, Nishinomiya City Ôtani Memorial Gallery/ Asahi Shinbunsha, 1982, p.143.
111. *Japanese Nineteenth-Century Copperplate Prints*, Edited by Tim Clark, The British Museum, 1994.

1869. Gengendô worked for the bureau and other government offices to print currency notes, postage stamps, and government securities and drafts until 1874, when the government brought in Western machinery and technicians such as Edward Chiossone and Iwahashi Noriaki, one of the official technical students who had gone to Vienna with the exhibition delegates (see Chapter Two).[112] According to Iwahashi's son Shôzan, his father tried to learn the techniques of copperplate printing but the major masters would not reveal the secret,[113] possibly because of the confidentiality required for government-related works. Their attitude may have contributed to the relative isolation of the technique.

The obvious disadvantage of the woodblock prints as a modern reproduction method was the limited number of impressions which could be pulled from the block. The Western technique of wood engraving, using a plate that is cut across the grain and engraved with burin, was imported by Gôda Kiyoshi (1862-1938). Gôda had gone to Paris in 1880 - with his brother who had been appointed to the Japanese Consulate - and studied wood engraving. He taught the technique after his return to Japan in 1887. The block cut across the grain was more durable than the block cut along the grain. It could also be printed with

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112. 'Dôsekihangyô Gengendô Matsuda Atsutomo-no Keireki', originally published in 1892, in Aoki and Sakai, *Bijutsu*, pp.291-3.
113. 'Reminiscences of the Printing and Art in early Meiji', originally published in 1934, in *Nihon Kindai Dôhanga-ten*, p.140.

the type, so it was used for illustrations for newspapers and books.

Apart from the linear perspective and chiaroscuro of oil painting, Western art influenced prints in the Meiji period through the direct teaching of engraving, lithograph and woodcut printing by foreign artists. Two names can be mentioned here: Charles Wirgman (1835-91), English illustrator for *The Illustrated London News*, and George Bigot (1850-1921), a French artist known for his satirical cartoons. Wirgman arrived in Japan in 1857. From 1859 he lived in Yokohama and drew current political events for the British magazine. He also painted in oil and watercolours, and taught some Japanese artists such as Takahashi Yuichi and Goseda Yoshimatsu, the pioneers of Japanese oil painting, as well as Kobayashi Kiyochika. Bigot had been an established artist in France before he came to Japan in 1882 and published his first book of cartoons in the same year, six months after his arrival. He stayed in Japan for eighteen years during which he published twenty books and six magazine titles such as *Tobae* and *Ohayo*. He also sent cartoons to progressive newspapers. The strong messages carried by Bigot's refined drawings inspired some Japanese artists. Watanabe Yûkô (1855-1942), the sister of Goseda Yoshimatsu (1855-1915) and the daughter of Goseda Hôryû (1864-1943), both oil painters, published picture books in the same style.[Fig.18]

In 1900, a year after Bigot left Japan, a German painter Emil Orlik (1870-1932) arrived. Orlik had witnessed the effect that traditional Japanese prints had had in Europe.[114] He submitted his signed prints to the Hakubakai exhibition in 1901. His works were also introduced in two magazines, *Taiyô* and *Myôjô*. This environment provided a background to a fresh start for Japanese woodblock prints.

The Creative Print Movement

The term *Sôsaku Hanga Undô* (Creative Print Movement) refers to a series of conscious efforts by artists since the first years of this century to use the print as a means of expression, utilising the nature of print to its artistic advantage. A two-colour print entitled *Gyofu* (Fisherman), designed and executed by Yamamoto Kanae (1882-1946), is generally accepted as the first 'creative print'.[Fig.19] It is the size of a postcard and appeared in the July issue of *Myôjô* in 1904. The print depicts an old fisherman in his ceremonial coat for celebration of a rich haul, holding an old-fashoned long smoking pipe, and standing looking over the sea. The print was accompanied by a statement by Ishii Hakutei, then the editor of the magazine:

> On the 16th of June, my friend Yamamoto Kanae produced a painter's woodcut with his talents in wood

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114. Orlik had been interested in Japanese woodblock prints and determined to go to Japan, before he saw an exhibition of Japanese art in Vienna in 1899. He went to Japan in March 1900 and returned in February 1901. He revisited Japan in 1911 (Kuwabara Setsuko, *Emil Orlik und Japan* (in German), Haag & Herchen, 1987, extract kindly translated by Christine Leher.

engraving and painting. The knife was his brush.[115]

Yamamoto had been trained in wood engraving since he was eleven. At the time he produced the print, he was studying oil painting at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts while lodging in the household of the Ishii family and supporting himself with his skill in commercial engraving. According to Ishii Tsuruzô, Hakutei's younger brother, Yamamoto used an ordinary woodblock (that is, a block cut along the grain) for this print, using the engraving technique of cutting out the image on an inked surface.[116] Ishii Hakutei, who wrote the introduction, was also a painter and student at the same school although an eye trouble forced him to leave the school. He had been a printing apprentice at the Mint. His father, a printing technician, was also an established Japanese-style painter.

Yamamoto's *Fisherman* was not the first creative print according to the definition just given. But it signalled the beginning of a movement which would eventually change the concept of prints. At the time of the *Fisherman,* the word *hanga* (literally 'plate-picture'), which is now the common term for prints, did not exist. The conventional woodblock prints and other forms of prints were called *surimono* (printed matter). Soon after he published the print, Yamamoto and a few other young men of like mind produced the magazine *Heitan.* It was during its brief

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115. Ono Tadashige, *Hanga*, 1977, p.195.
116. Ogura Tadao, *Genshoku Gendai Nihon-no Bijutsu: Hanga*, Shôgakukan, 1978, p.152.

lifetime that the word *hanga* was born. Ishii Hakutei first called Yamamoto's prints *tôga* (knife picture), meaning pictures whose lines were cut with a knife rather than painted with a brush. As noted above, *Heitan* was followed by *Hôsun*, a magazine of prints, poetry and art criticism, whose three founding members - Yamamoto, Ishii and Morita - had all been involved in *Heitan*. *Hôsun* published woodcuts, engravings and lithographs made by its members including Oda Kazuma, one of the pioneers of creative lithographs. Another member, Morita Tsunetomo, contributed etchings. According to Ono Tadashige, a printmaker and print historian, the word *hanga* emerged as a term covering prints made with different techniques. The idea was, as the members of *Hôsun* put it in 1911:

> when a form is engraved and the impression is pulled, the effect is not of a watercolour or an oil painting. Thus it is called 'hanga'.[117]

A little earlier, in 1909, Ishii Hakutei was asked to write the *hanga* entry in *The Encyclopaedia of Literature and Art*, published by Waseda Bungakusha. In the article, Ishii further termed this new kind of print 'creative prints' as opposed to 'reproductive prints', which were mechanical reproductions of paintings or drawings.

Although the term Creative Prints had been established and its concept set up, its definitions in relation to reproductive prints were still unclear. For example, the group's lithographer Oda Kazuma later excluded the prints

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117. 'Tokyo Hanga Kurabu', *Hôsun,* vol.5, no.1, 1911.

he had published in *Hôsun* from a catalogue of works because: 'the early works were made without being conscious of creating prints. I made them just in the same way as I made professional reproductive prints.'[118] The difference could be seen, perhaps, only by the artist himself. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier in the chapter, the members of the early movement such as Ishii Hakutei were ardent admirers of *ukiyo-e* prints and they continued to have their designs executed by others such as Igami Bonkotsu (blockcutter) and Nishimura Kumakichi (printer). It was a little later, particularly with the appearance of the New Prints, that the definitions of creative prints would become the focus of debate among print artists.

Ishii Hakutei was the editor of the magazine *Myôjô* in 1904. *Myôjô* published reproductions of Western art as well as paintings by younger artists in woodblock prints. Yosano Tekkan, the chief editor of *Myôjô*, was particularly fond of Igami Bonkotsu (1875-1933) who joined Shinshisha as an associated member in 1902 in his professional capacity and not as a literary member. He was said to be particularly skilled in representing the quality of the original, whether it was oil or watercolour. Igami strongly advocated the artistic quality of prints and aimed to 'create each print just as a painter creates each painting.'[119]

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118. Quoted by Ono in Sakai/Sasaki, *Kindai Nihon Bijutsushi II*, Yûhikaku, 1977, p.199.
119. *Fûshin* Vol.1, no.11, July 1988, p.14.

The stages of the early creative prints were rather limited. During the first years, the group magazines were almost the only means to display them in public. The first exhibition to accept prints alongside paintings was staged by Hakubakai, which exhibited Emil Orlik's prints in 1900.[120] These were, however, works by an European artist, and it still took some time before woodblock prints by Japanese artists were regularly shown at exhibitions.

Development of the Creative Print Movement after 1910 and the New Print Movement

The appearance of the literary and art magazine *Shirakaba* and the new culture it represented had a significant impact on the course of the Creative Print Movement. First of all, the magazine introduced many Western printmakers and their works. For example, the second issue included nine woodcut prints by Félix Vallotton, and the third issue five woodcut prints by Beardsley. They also offered copies of some of the reproductions to the readers as postcards. In October 1912, they organised an exhibition of Western prints. Major artists represented were (number of prints in brackets): Beardsley (32), Vallotton (26), Klinger (18), Larsson (16), Slevogt (15)

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120. Orlik exhibited one woodcut, one lithograph and two etchings along with some watercolours and a pastel drawing (*Kenkyû Shiryô: Hakubakai Tenrankai Shuppin Mokuroku 1*, Bijutsu-bu Dai-2 Kenkyûshitsu (ed.), Tokyo National Research Institute of Important Cultural Properties, 1992.

and Vögeler (14). In all, thirty-seven artists were to be represented.[121]

The first of the exhibitions of Western artists organised by the magazine was held late in 1911. The artists represented in this exhibition, though mostly in reproductions, included Cezanne, Degas, Klinger, Manet, Munch, Beardsley, Renoir, Rodin, Vogeler and many others. The exhibition was held for ten days and received an average of twenty-five visitors a day apart from those who came by invitation, and it made a small profit.[122] The collection was assembled through mail orders from catalogues, the group's friends overseas and magazines such as *The Studio*. Orders were made through Maruzen, a major importers of Western books. *Shirakaba* thus created wider opportunities for young artists to see how Western artists expressed themselves in prints, particularly in woodblock prints. It may seem ironic that some of these Western artists, like Vallotton, had in fact been inspired by Japanese prints. The Japanese and Western artists, however, are similar in that they both sought and obtained inspiration from something outside their immediate background cultures.

Independently of *Shirakaba*'s activities, in 1914 an exhibition entitled 'DER STURM *Mokuhanga Tenrankai*' was

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121. The numbers are as advertised in *Shirakaba* (vol.2, no.10). They ordered all those prints, but some, like five prints by Munch, apparently did not arrive in time for the exhibition.
122. *Shirakaba* vol.2, no.11, 1911.

held in Tokyo, showing works of Léger, Kirchner, Marc, Kandinsky, Kokoschka and others, which must have inspired many artists.[123]

Rôkandô, the first modern art gallery in Japan, established by Takamura Kôtarô, held an exhibition of woodblock prints by Minami Kunzô in 1911. It was the first one-man print show. Takamura and Minami were only two of a large number of young artists freshly returned from Western countries who brought new ideas and concepts with them. The new environment paved the way for the next stage of the Creative Print Movement beginning in 1912, with the *Kamen* (mask), by Hasegawa Kiyoshi (1891-1980) and Nagase Yoshirô (1891-1978). While both *Hôsun* and *Kamen* were magazines of prints and poetry, the next major publication *Tsukuhae* (Moon Shadow, 1914-15) was solely dedicated to prints, produced by Onchi Koshirô (1891-1955), Tanaka Kyôkichi (1892-1915) and Fujimori Shizuo (1891-1943).[Figs.20-23] *Tsukuhae* was published by Rakuyôdô, the publisher of *Shirakaba*, after three copies of three private volumes had been issued as trials.

The inward-looking, urban sentiment of the works of the three artists gives *Tsukuhae* a unique position in the

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123. The exhibition was sponsored by the German magazine DER STURM, and the works were brought to Japan by Yamada Kôsaku (a composer, 1886-1965) and Saitô Kazô (designer, 1887-1955) who had been studying in Berlin and had become acquainted with Herwarth Walden, the director of DER STURM. See Fujii Hisae, *Bulletin of the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo*, 1987, pp.15-45. The Bulletin includes a full list and some images of the exhibits.

development of creative prints although the magazine ended following the seventh issue in 1915 with the death of Tanaka Kyôkichi. Tanaka's long struggle against the tuberculosis which finally took his life, and his obsession with unfulfilled sexual desire, mark his works with a distinct character. Tanaka is also known for his illustrations for the book *Tsuki-ni Hoeru* (Howling at the Moon), a collection of poems by Hagiwara Sakutarô.[Fig.24] Hagiwara's poems, one may say, perfectly echo the visual imagery of Tanaka's prints and drawings. Tanaka devoted himself, virtually on his deathbed, to work on the illustrations. He did not live to complete all the illustrations he had planned, but the book was published with what he had drawn.

Onchi Kôshirô, another important member of the *Tsukuhae* group, was to dominate the Japanese printmaking world until his death in 1955. Onchi was born into a privileged family. From an early stage he made many abstract prints, though they were too far ahead of their time to be appreciated. While making his living as a professional book designer, he dedicated himself to the cause of promoting prints as art.[Fig.25]

In 1916 the first exhibition of Creative Prints was held. Two years later, the Japan Creative Print Association was formed. Yamamoto Kanae was made the first president. The association set out its main objectives:

To organise exhibitions for creative prints

To spread the Creative Print Movement

To make government exhibitions accept prints, and

To make the Tokyo School of Fine Arts establish a printmaking division.

Eventually in 1927, Teiten, the government-sponsored national annual exhibition, accepted the entry of prints.

Shin Hanga Undô (the New Print Movement) was started by a *ukiyo-e* publisher Watanabe Shôzaburô. Watanabe first recruited Hashiguchi Goyô, then Itô Shinsui followed by many others, to make the original design, from which he reproduced commercial prints with his block-cutter and printer. The print artists of the Creative Print Movement were very conscious of the New Prints, and they took pains to distinguish their prints from Watanabe's reproductive prints.

Doing one's own designing, block-cutting and printing was initially considered a necessity by the pioneers of the Creative Print Movement, as the artists wanted to keep control over their work. In 1927, when the Japan Creative Prints Association was lobbying Teiten to accept prints, it stated: 'The creative print is a creative picture that is blockcut and printed by the artist.'[124] One adverse consequence of this emphasis on the one-person production was that the technical quality of the prints sometimes

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124. The statement, however, was somewhat amended the next year to say that prints drawn, cut and printed by the artist was a general rule and not an absolute one.

became slack. Eventually, committed printmakers became unsatisfied with the situation and, together with lithographers and copperplate engravers, left the Association in 1930. Reconciliation came in the following year, and the two groups merged to form the *Nihon Hanga Kyôkai* (Japan Printmaking Association).

Although the debate on the process of printmaking became rather heated at times, it seems to have been a transitory stage of the development of modern printmaking during which the artists tried to identify themselves and the medium.[125]

Modern artistic consciousness, initially achieved through the zest and pain of the pioneers like Takamura Kôtarô, opened up immense possiblities for young and creative minds. Individualism, humanism and exoticism allowed them to view objects unrestricted by conventional norms. This background played a crucial role in the development of modern crafts.

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125. After the Pacific War, the Japan Printmaking Association held regular meetings at Watanabe's shop, indicating that the debate was no longer an issue.

CHAPTER TWO

Development of Craft from 1868 to 1910

Individualism and the individualistic aesthetics which flourished during the Taishô era (1912-26) fundamentally transformed the craft of the period. But to look at the actual process of its transformation, both of the industry and its concepts, one needs to go back in history, to the beginning of Japan's modernisation in 1868.

2-1. Effects of social changes on craft industry in early Meiji

The Meiji Restoration brought about many changes to Japanese society which had been protected from direct outside influence for about 250 years. Particularly important for the craft industry were: *haitôrei*, the order that prohibited the samurai from carrying swords (1876); the formation and development of State Shintoism; the rapid adoption of Western culture; foreign trade; and a large inflow of Westerners as diplomats, foreign employees, merchants and tourists.

The Meiji government faced the vast task of uniting a country which had been divided into small clans, each governed independently by its lord who, although subordinate to the Shôgun himself, was the clan ruler and

lawmaker and was responsible for the clan's cultural and economic development. During the Edo period, which preceded Meiji, the retainers' sense of loyalty for their lord was often very strong[1]. The Meiji government therefore took several measures in order to establish strong centralised power. One was to disarm regional forces by abolishing the samurai, or warrior class's, privilege of carrying swords. At the same time it introduced compulsory conscription and established a police force in 1872.[2] During the restructuring of the social order, many ex-lords of the *bakuhan* (clan fief) system, who had been the main patrons of traditional art and craft, either lost their positions or moved to Tokyo to serve the new government. The changing circumstances often caused economic difficulties and forced them to sell their collections. Sometimes they were given as a keepsake to close retainers who had served the family for generations. Some crafts became redundant - the worst hit were the makers of traditional armour and various ceremonial crafts, which declined as the samurai class disappeared. Many craftsmen who lost their patrons had to be satisfied with any work that brought an income. According to Urasaki, the famous metalwork craftsman Kanô Natsuo (known for his sword guards) was making metal parts

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1. An example of this can be seen in the Ôishi Incident of 1701 in which Chamberlain Ôishi and 46 other retainers of Major-Domo Asano killed Lord Kira to avenge Lord Asano. The story was made into a play immediately after the incident and it has been one of the most popular stories in Japan.
2. For historical facts and dates, see Sakamoto Tôru (ed.), *Nihonshi Shôjiten,* eighth edition, Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1976.

for tobacco containers; Hashimoto Ichizô, a scabbard decorator, was applying lacquer in bamboo patterns for smoking pipes; and the master saddler Kizukuri Sadakado worked in wood-carving.[3] In his book published in 1878, Sir Rutherford Alcock (1809-97), the first British Minister to Japan, refers to the fine metalwork of sword guards and tobacco pouches:

> Whoever possesses any of these should value them highly, for, to all appearances, they are not likely to be reproduced, from the failure of native demand and patronage.[4]

Another government measure was to develop Shintô into a national religion to spiritually bind the people.[5] In 1868, the government established the *Jingikan* (Office of Liturgical Affairs) under the *Dajôkan* (Regency Office), to plan and enforce the government's religious policies. In the same year, the Regency Office proclaimed the Separation of Shintô from Buddhism. It prohibited Shintô shrines from holding Buddha's images as the patron or displaying Buddhist objects at shrines.

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3. Urasaki Eishaku, *Nihon Kindai Bijutsu Hattatsushi: Meiji-hen*, Tokyo Bijutsu, 1974, p.77.
4. *Art and Art Industries in Japan,* Virtue and Co., London, 1878, p.169-70.
5. Shintô, the indigenous Japanese religion, had taken various forms from nature worship to deification of historic or local heroes and had long been integrated into the life of the Japanese people. In the course of history, many major Shintô shrines came to be paired with their Buddhist counterpart - such as Kôfukuji with Kasuga shrine in Nara. Furthermore, during the Edo period, Buddhist temples were authorised by the government to act as the local registration office to keep the birth and death records of the parishes - originally for the purpose of keeping Christian influence under control. Thus at the end of the Edo period, Buddhist institutions were the more powerful of the two religions.

The proclamation unleashed a deep resentment against the Buddhist temples, which had ruled the people as the grass-roots level of the feudal order and kept Shintô shrines subordinate. It thus triggered an anti-Buddhist campaign. Shintô priests throughout the country, who had long wished for independence from the Buddhists, allied with anti-Buddhist scholars, Confucianists and local authorities. They joined the action against the degradation and corruption of various Buddhist sects, and the campaign escalated into a nationwide destruction of Buddhist objects.[6] The active destruction of Buddhist temples was often led by the head of the local government. Makimura Masanao, the Governor of Kyoto, was responsible for destroying Buddha images and other liturgical objects, or for confiscating the estates of temples. In Nara, the centuries-old Kôfukuji temple was separated from the Kasuga shrine and all the Buddhist monks were made priests of the shrine. The once powerful and flourishing Kôfukuji was left unattended.[7] Those temples which escaped destruction fell into economic distress, and many temple treasures had to be sold at low prices whenever buyers

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6. Murakami Shigeyoshi, *Kokka Shintô*, Iwanami Shoten, 1970, p.87.
7. A certain Yasaburô was to buy the five-story pagoda for 25 yen. The price estimate was based on the value of its metal objects following a planned burning of the structure, which would have been too expensive to demolish. But the plan to burn the pagoda met strong opposition from the neighbouring residents who were afraid that the fire might spread to their houses. Thus the five-story pagoda, together with the three-story pagoda which was to be sold at 30 yen, survived (Murakami, p.100).

were found. They became 'an easy prey for foreign collectors'.[8]

The government-led *bunmei kaika* (Civilisation and Enlightenment) campaign encouraged people to adopt the 'Western' style in many aspects of life - food, clothes and so on. The campaign was part of the Westernisation policy aimed at achieving equal trade treaties and removing consular courts.[9] An important event in this context was the Iwakura Embassy of 1871 to 1873, which took a party of forty-eight government officials through the United States, to England, Scotland and Europe.[10] A Journal of the trip, a record of the observations made by the mission in general, was written by Kume Kunitake (father of the painter Kume Kunitake) and was published in 1878 in five volumes.[11] In the Preface, Kume summarises the background of the mission: time is forcing Japan to

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8. Yamaguchi Seiichi, *Fenorosa: Nihon Bunka-no Sen'yô-ni Sasageta Isshô*. vol.2, Sanseidô, Tokyo, 1982, p.10.
9. Different aspects of the radical Westernisation, and the 'Japanisation' or traditionalism that followed it, have been presented in Donald H. Shively (ed.), *Tradition and Modernisation in Japanese Culture*, Princeton University Press, 1971.
10. On the size of the Embassy, Eugene Soviak gives about a hundred, while Kume's journal says forty-eight officials. In another section, however, Kume suggests that other people accompanied the party. See E. Soviak, 'On the nature of Western progress: The journal of the Iwakura Embassy' in *Tradition and Modernization in Japanese culture*, p.11; Kume Kunitake, *Tokumei Zenken Taishi Beiô Kairan Jikki*, vol.1, Ch.1, p.1, and Preface, p.5.
11. Reports on other specific subjects (such as details of government, religious and military systems) were made by relevant officials (Kume, *Jikki*, Foreword, pp.1-2).

make radical changes, and now that the country has opened itself to other nations, it is necessary to establish its diplomatic principles.[12] In other words, the mission set out to assess Japan's position among the world's developed nations. As Shively claims, 'the effectiveness of the Embassy lies in the fact that many of its members, upon their return, occupied key positions in government and could set about at once implementing programs according to their findings.'[13] Indeed, the main members of the mission consisted of some of the central figures of the Meiji government - Iwakura Tomomi, Kido Takayoshi, Ôkubo Toshimichi and Itô Hirobumi.

The mission's visits to museums in major cities and the Vienna International Exhibition seem to have been influential in the subsequent government policies on art and craft. In London, they first visited the South Kensington (now Victoria and Albert) Museum. Kume described the history of the museum in relation to the International Exhibition of 1851: now British had become aware of the ugliness of their products, so they built the

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12. Kume, *Jikki*, Foreword, p.2.
13. Soviak, p.4. At the time of the mission, the government was divided into two factions: one which advocated expansionism, insisting on invading and colonising Korea, while the other, including Iwakura, considered that internal reform was the priority. After some political struggle following the Embassy's return, the latter took the initiative. Saigô Takamori, one of the leaders of the former, resigned from the government and later led a rebellion against the government. Saigô's rebellion of 1877 (*Seinan sensô*) was the last and largest of the rebellions suppressed by the newly established Meiji government. The defeated Saigô committed suicide in the same year.

museum and art school in order to improve the quality of their art and craft. Kume's personal comment that follows is revealing: although the wealth of the European countries, their standard of living, thriving trade and art seemed as if they had always been that way, in fact they had only achieved that level during the previous forty years, after the steam-engine ships and railways had been developed. Furthermore, he particularly noticed that in art and craft, Britain, recognising that its products had been behind those of France, had made various measures as a result of which British had 'discarded the bad habit of imitating the French and developed its own taste.'[14] Kume saw that through international exhibitions the British had learned to develop their own craft to their own taste while other European nations had been eager to import French products which were superior to their own. He thus warned that Japan should not be so infatuated with Western products to an extent that it would lose sight of their own craft.[15] It is important to note that, although the general tide swayed from extreme westernisation to nationalism in the following decades, there was this long-term view within the government towards developing and improving the standard of Japan's own craft.

One of the outcomes of the government's Westernisation program was the worship of Western customs and objects, which had negative effects on traditional art and craft.

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14. Kume, *Jikki*, vol.2, Ch.23, p.55.
15. Kume, *Jikki*, vol.2, Ch.23, pp.57-8.

At the time, antique shop owners were often found scraping gold leaf off the *maki-e* (lacquerware) as the decorated container was worth less than the gold leaf on its own.[16] Devalued traditional craft pieces often found their way into the hands of foreign collectors. As Western countries learned more about Japanese art, demand for traditional Japanese products increased. French collectors such as Theodore Duret (1823-1891), Enrico Cernuschi (1821-96) and Samuel Bing (1838-1905) visited Japan for short buying trips. But a more serious cause of the outflow of craft objects was some of the highly paid foreign employees of the Japanese government who had decisive advantages with time, money and contacts - particularly Edoardo Chiossone (1832-98), Francis Brinkley (1841-1912), Edward Morse (1838-1925), William Anderson (1842-1900) and Ernest Fenollosa (1853-1908) - who purchased massive collections.[17] The inflow of overseas collectors was triggered by the large-scale exposure of Japanese art at international exhibitions in England,

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16. Yamaguchi, p.11.
17. The Japanese government, in its effort to introduce Western technology and science, engaged numerous foreign scholars and technical advisers under different government departments to educate the Japanese staff as well as to plan and supervise projects. Their area of expertise included: mining and matallurgy, shipbuilding, printing and minting, architecture, civil engineering, textiles, electric communication, chemistry, and reclamation and agriculture. A series of studies on these employees and their roles have been published by Kashima Shuppankai, 1968-1976. Also see Saegusa, Nozaki and Sasaki, *Kindai Nihon Sangyô Gijutsu-no Seiôka*, Tôyô Keizaisha, 1960.

Europe and America from the early 1860s.[18]

2-2. Introduction of Japanese art to the West: early exhibitions[19]

The history of the introduction of Japanese art to the West has been closely studied in the catalogues of two exhibitions: *Japonisme* (1988), John Clark, *Japanese and British Exchanges in Art, 1850s - 1930s*, (privately published 1989), and *Japan and Britain: The Aesthetic Dialogue 1850-1930* (1991-92).[20] Those catalogues show that Western interest in Japan and Japanese objects had existed long before Meiji.[21] For the purpose of looking at the influence of foreign interest and demand on Japanese craft, however, the starting point may be set at the British International Exhibition in 1862.

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18. Hosaka Kiyoshi examines the relationship between the outflow of art objects and foreign employees and visitors in his book, *Fenollosa: "Nihon Bijutsu no Onjin" no Kage no Bubun*, Kawaide Shobô Shinsha, 1989, pp.29-65.
19. According to Urasaki Eishaku, the Japanese word *haku-ran-kai* (exhibition) comes from *Haku-gaku-sô-ran* (Collected Erudite Display) while *ten-ran-kai*, another word for exhibition, comes from *ten-ji-jû-ran* (Display and inspect). The former has generally been used for industrial and commercial exhibitions and the latter for art, craft and other specified groups of items. There is another word, *ten-ji-kai* (Display/Show), which is used for exhibitions in smaller scales often within a large building or institution (Urasaki, p.733).
20. I used the Japanese version of the *Japonisme* catalogue and both the English and Japanese catalogues of the *Japan and Britain: An Aesthetic Dialogue 1850-1930* (published in 1988 and 1992 respectively).
21. See for example, Ellen P. Conant, 'Refractions of the Rising Sun', *Japan and Britain*, 1991, p.79-81. Also *Japonisme*, 1988, p.44-55.

International exhibitions, particularly the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London, showed a successful display meant a large increase in a country's exports. A few Japanese items were recorded among the exhibits in those early exhibitions,[22] but it was not until 1862 that Japan was represented in its own right. There was no involvement by the Japanese government, however, and the Japan Court of the 1862 exhibition in London was organised by Sir Rutherford Alcock, then the British Minister to Japan. Alcock was initially instructed to organise the exhibits either through the Japanese themselves or through foreign merchants. As it turned out, however, neither of them was interested in the project - the Japanese ruling classes at the time preferred to preserve their international isolation rather than promote cultural intercourse with foreign nations, while the foreign merchants were busy establishing their own businesses in the unstable political environment of the newly opened country.[23] So Alcock collected and sent 614 items to be exhibited.[24] The exhibits were sold to the public after the exhibition and the buyers included the British artists

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22. Conant, 'Reflections of the Rising Sun', p.79.
23. Alcock, pp.1-2.
24. According to the *Japonisme* catalogue, Captain F. Howard Weiss, the then British Consulate General in Kanagawa (a prefecture adjacent to Tokyo) cooperated in the project (p.51).

William Burges,[25] Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Nesfield, Christopher Dressor[26] and Edward Godwin.[27] The success of the Japanese objects at the exhibition was recorded by Alcock:

> In the Report of the Jurors of the International Exhibition of 1862, the numerous specimens of brooches, clasps and medallions, in various metals... together with two unique equestrian statuettes... were noticed in their award of a medal, in the following terms... "For a collection of bronzes of characteristic excellence, this collection is very remarkable: the smaller fancy objects, such as brooches and clasps, are admirably executed. In all the figures the national character is represented with perfect truth and expression... Great aptitude is evinced in these works."[28]

The first international exhibition in which the Japanese government agreed to take part was the Paris Exhibition of 1867, organised by Napoleon III. This being before the establishment of the Meiji government, the Commissioners consisted of the Shôgun's representatives as well as delegates from Satsuma-han and Saga-han, the two southern clans of strong political influence. The display of the Japan Court at the Paris Exhibition included a model of a Japanese house, paintings (including oil paintings), prints, crafts and furniture. In addition, a troupe was

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25. Burges was an English Gothic Revival architect whose interest in Japanese art inspired his pupil Josia Conder to go to Japan (M. Crook, *William Burges and the High Victorian Dream*, 1981, p.52-3). Condor later came to be called the father of Japanese Western style architecture. Tatsuno Kingo, Iwamura Tôru's brother and one of Conder's pupils, went to Britain in 1880 and worked at Burges' office for seven months unti Burges' death in 1881 (*Japan and Britain*, p.108).
26. Dresser visited Japan for a buying trip in 1876-77 (*Japonisme*, p.372).
27. *Japonisme*, p.52.
28. Alcock, pp.166-67.

brought from Japan and gave an acrobatics and magic display at the Napoleon Circus.[29]

By the 1873 International Exhibition in Vienna, the Meiji government had clearly set its goal of promoting export industries. The government appointed Sano Tsunetami, who had experienced the 1867 Paris Exhibition, as the vice chief administrator to lead the seventy-two delegates to Vienna. The *Ôshû Hakurankai Sandô kiyô*, the official report of the exhibition, contains Sano's proceedings for the Exhibition in which he proposed five objectives. They are in summary:

1. To impress foreign countries with the quality of Japanese products and win their recognition
2. To learn about Western art and industry from their exhibits
3. To prepare for the establishment of a museum
4. To pave the way for the development of export industries
5. To learn about foreign products and their demand for Japanese products[30]

The government made careful preparations for Japan's participation, including a national survey of antique objects in 1871. Late in 1872, the Government exhibited in Tokyo the objects to be sent to Vienna. After a viewing by the Emperor and Empress, the show was opened to the public for nine days. In March 1874, after the Vienna Exhibition was over, in March 1874, foreign machinery that

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29. *Japonisme*, pp.54-55.
30. Tanaka Yoshio & Hirayama Narinobu(eds.), *Ôshû hakurankai sandô kiyô*, vol.1, 1897, pp.11-12.

had been purchased there, including 'mills, reels and loom, and other machinery large and small, brick-making machines, plaster casts, printed types, raw material for dyes etc.', was also displayed for public inspection.[31]

Japan achieved a great success at the Exhibition by winning a number of medals for the exhibits. More importantly, however, the participation in the Exhibition paved the way for permanent channels for export of craft products. The *Kiritsu Kôshô Kaisha* (Company for Founding Industry and Commerce), a government-assisted enterprise, was founded in the following year. The Japanese government owed much to Gottfried Wagener (1831-92), a German scientist it employed at the time, for the success at the exhibition.[32] Wagener carefully selected exhibits and prepared a comprehensive list for European spectators as well as acting as a mediator for the Japanese delegates. He also arranged for the *Gijutsu Denshûsei* (Technical Training Students) to obtain the best results within limited periods.[33] Under the scheme, a number of men, experts in certain industries, accompanied Sano

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31. Urasaki, p.79.
32. Sano Tsunetami acknowledges Wagener's contribution in the *Ôkoku Hakurankai Sandô Kiyô* (vol.1, 1897, p.4). The *Kiyô* also includes Wagener's biography (vol.2, 53-72). Many other references to Wagener and his contributions are available: for example, see Urasaki, p.53-57, and Kaneko Kenji(ed.), *Meiji-no Sôshoku Kôgei*, a special issue of *Taiyô*, Heibonsha, 1990, pp.131-135. Books on the development of specific industries also contain descriptions on Wagener's contributions to the industry.
33. *Ôshû Hakurankai Sandô Kiyô*, vol.3, pp.48-50. Also Suzuki Kenji, *Meiji-no Sôshoku Kôgei*, p.5.

Tsunetami to the Vienna Exhibition and remained in the city after the exhibition to learn various skills with Wagener's assistance. The areas they covered were:

1 silkworm breeding
1 fruit growing
1 forestry
1 type-making, typing-paper making, glass-making, pencil-making,
1 surveying tool-making, compass-making
1 clock-making, telegraph machinery making
1 silk reeling
1 weaving
1 dyeing
2 ceramics
1 plaster casting
1 spectacle making, stone and marble polishing
1 wood/leather varnishing
1 cigar-making
1 lithography, painting and mapping
1 technical drawing
1 bakery
1 architecture
1 shipbuilding
1 landscape gardening
1 garden landscaping
1 photography
1 wax-making and cement making
1 papermaking
1 statistics
1 unknown[34]

Arrangements were made for the students (who were already experienced in their fields) to study at relevant institutions, factories or workshops. They returned to Japan after several months and their knowledge was utilised in their respective fields. In ceramics, for instance, Nôtomi Sukejirô (1844-1918), Kawahara Chûjirô (1849-89) and Tanzan Mutsurô (1852-97) learned porcelain

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34. Because the total number of the 'technical students' often differ slightly in different books, I took Hida's reference here. According to Hida, in addition to the twenty-seven students with the official mission, there were eight 'unofficial' students who learned fishery, cigarette making, market research etc.(pp.360-370).

painting, modern ceramics production and plaster casting methods.[35] Ceramics was regarded as an area with a large export potential. It was also recognised, however, that some European ceramics surpassed their Japanese counterparts 'in taste, shape, intricacy of picture and sophistication of production.'[36] Plaster casting was one of the major items to be mastered. Also needed were techniques of making some features of the Western tableware which the traditional Japanese products lacked - such as teacup handles and large-size porcelain plates.

The Vienna Exhibition was a watershed in the development of ceramics industry in Japan. Prior to it, detailed instructions were issued from the secretariat to the ceramics producers in Imari prefecture (now Saga prefecture) urging them to make products that would be both attractive and useful to the potential Western markets.[37] The technique of overglaze enamel (*e-tsuke*) is one of the areas that developed into an industry for the Vienna Exhibition. The organisers also set up a workshop

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35. *Ôshû Hakurankai Sandô Kiyô*, vol.3, p.18. Although Hida records two Technical Learning Students in ceramics, *Kiyô* and Matsumoto Genji say that Tanzan Mutsurô from Kyoto also took part in the study of ceramics, making the total number of ceramics students three. Matsuo Gisuke, later one of the founders of Kiritsu Kôshô Kaisha, was also a member of the Japanese delegates. He was in charge of sales of the exhibits (Matsumoto, p.83).
36. *Ôshû Hakurankai Sandô Kiyô*, vol.3, pp.18-19. According to Matsumoto, Kume Kunitake observed at the Exhibition that English ceramics were represented by Stoke-on-Trent (Minton), Germany by Meissen and Berlin, and Austria by Bohemia (*Arita Tôgyô Sokumen-shi*, vol.1, Bakushûsha, Tokyo, 1985, p.97).

37. Matsumoto, pp.78-82.

in Tokyo, to which a large number of plain porcelain pieces were sent from Seto and Arita. Prominent painter were engaged to make pictures on them. The success of these painted porcelain pieces in Vienna triggered foreign demand which, in turn, caused the industry to develop in other parts of Japan.[38]

At the Exhibition, Kawahara, a ceramics technician from Arita, met Kume Kunitake, the secretry of the Iwakura Embassy. The Embassy was staying in Vienna at the time, and Kume 'invited him [Kawahara] and Nôtomi Sukejirô to his hotel at nights or visited them at their accommodation and spoke of what he had seen in the various places in America and Europe, particularly of ceramic regions.'[39] It seems that Kume was very keen on modernising the ceramics industry in Japan, particularly that of Arita porcelain, and told Kawahara of the operations at the Minton factory in England and the plaster casting technique of the Sèvres kiln near Paris. He recommended that a Bohemian kiln would be suitable for them to study because the scale of the English and French factories was too big.[40] Thus, on the conclusion of the Exhibition, Kawahara and Nôtomi spent a month at a Bohemian kiln, observing their mechanised operation and the plaster casting technique. In the following year, the government set up a Viennese-style ceramics teaching centre in Tokyo where Kawahara and Nôtomi were appointed to teach students

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38. Matsumoto, pp.93-94.
39. Matsumoto, p.91.
40. Matsumoto, pp.97-98.

from all over Japan.[41]

Nôtomi was also assigned to be an examiner at the Exhibition, which enabled him to observe European exhibits closely. While learning in Bohemia, he was particularly keen to observe the plaster casting technique. After the Exhibition, he made a private trip to Paris to observe the Sèvres factory.[42]

The third student of ceramics was Tanzan Mutsuo, son of an Awata potter in Kyoto. In 1872, during the preparations for the Vienna Exhibition, Tanzan was in Tokyo, studying under Wagener. He returned to Kyoto to organise submissions of Awata ware with his father who, like Tanzan himself, was technically ahead of other potters. They were experimenting in overglaze technique with good results, and this was why the young Tanzan was selected as a Japanese delegate to the Exhibition. During the Exhibition, he went to a technical school in Vienna and, after the Exhibition, he was sent to a public ceramics workshop in Bohemia for one month to study various ceramics techniques.[43]

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41. Matsumoto, pp.98-100.
42. *Ôshû hakurankai sandô kiyô*, vol.III, pp.116-118.
43. What he concentrated most, however, was learning the technique of printing photographs on ceramic pieces. That displeased Sano Tsunetami and the Chief Secretary Aida who thought Tanzan neglected the purpose of his mission, so he visited other workshops observing their overglaze techniques until his departure in February 1874 (*Ôshû hakurankai sandô kiyô* vol.III, pp.106-7). Tanzan was only one of many intelligent men who were creative and hungry for new possibilities.

2-3. Export-oriented production of craft industry: 1870s

Successes at international exhibitions increased export orders, and this encouraged Japanese craft industry. The 1870s was the time when growing exports overwhelmed considerations for quality and planning for the future of the industry. The government saw international exhibitions primarily as trade fairs, opportunities to promote Japanese products (which were mainly traditional handcrafts) and improve Japan's trade figures.

After the early international exhibitions, exports of crafts increased.[44] The sudden increase of demand pressured the production system as most of the crafts were produced at traditional family-based workshops and were unable to cope with large orders. As a result, some pottery-producing regions began to include poor quality goods to make up the numbers, which quickly destroyed their reputation.[45]

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44. Suzuki, 'Kindai Kôgei-no Akebono', *Meiji-no Sôshoku Kôgei*, pp.4-5. In 1873 (the year of the Vienna Exhibition), ceramics export jumped to 116,000yen from 45,000yen in the previous year. Lacquerware earned 158,000yen also in 1873. If metalwork and carvings were added, the total of craft exports would approach the figures of copper and kelp (both over 530,000yen in the same year). Raw silk, tea and rice were the three top export items, but craftworks were the only major non-primary product export category (Kodama Kôta, et.al.(eds), *Shiryô-ni yoru Nihon-no Ayumi*, Yoshikawa Kôbunkan, 1988, p.108).

45. Suzuki, *Meiji-no Sôshoku Kôgei*, p.5.

Participation in international exhibitions for promoting Japanese products was complemented by domestic exhibitions for promoting manufactures. The early industrial exhibitions were regional, the first being in Kyoto in 1871. The first exhibition on a national scale was the *Naikoku Kangyô Hakurankai* (Domestic Exhibition for Promotion of Industries) in 1877. It was organised immediately after the suppression of the anti-government rebellion by Saigô Takamori, when for the first time the government was free from the threat of civil wars and could concentrate on administration. Between 1871 and 1912 (the end of the Meiji era), twenty-seven major regional and national exhibitions were held. The fifth and the last of the Domestic Exhibitions for Promotion of Industries was held in 1903.[46]

The First Domestic Exhibition for the Promotion of Industries in 1877 did not select submissions for display, because its aim was to compare the size of exhibits from all regions. The display was grouped according to the origin of the products. This display method was changed for the Second Exhibition at which similar products were grouped together across the regions so that their quality could be compared at a glance, encouraging competition in quality among producers.[47] Manufactured entries at the

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46. 'Hakurankai jidai-no bijutsu kôgei', *Me-no Me*, no. 135, Satobumi Shuppan, 1987, p.45.
47. 'Naikoku Kangyô Hakurankai Chihôkan Kokoroe' (Directions to Regional Authorities for the Second National Exhibition for Promotion of Industry), in Urasaki, p.109.

Second Domestic Exhibition were also limited to products made after the First Exhibition. Older products and foreign products, which were submitted for the purpose of comparison, were not allowed to be sold.[48]

The development of domestic exhibitions shows the government's intention to promote and encourage the production of quality new products by providing competition and incentives. In the context of the history of craft, the significance of these exhibitions, as Hida Toyojirô points out, was that they provided the first official venues since the Restoration for traditional craftsmen and artisans to show their skills and win recognition.[49] At the same time, the exhibitions also became the vehicles for the shaping of the concept of craft, as will be discussed below.

'Art and craft' objects were exported through specialist traders both in Japan and overseas. The largest such firm, and the only one attached to the government, was Kiritsu Kôshô Kaisha, founded in 1874, the year after the

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48. *Extract of Regulations*, in Urasaki, p.108.
49. Hida Toyojirô, *Meiji-no Yushutsu Kôgei Zuan*, Kyôto Shoin, Kyoto, 1987, p.350.

Vienna Exhibition.[50] Kiritsu Kôshô Kaisha was headed by merchants Matsuo Gisuke (President) and Wakai Kenzaburô (Vice-President), and lasted until 1891. The company traded in handcraft and painted objects from many regions as well as managing its own workshop, employing top-level craftsmen of the time. The company was also involved in many international exhibitions, the first being the Philadelphia International Exhibition in 1876, after which it established branch offices in New York (1877) and Paris (1878). *Japonisme* in Europe was at its peak around the 1878 Paris Exhibition, and the company prospered for the following few years.[51] In 1881, Wakai re-employed the young Hayashi Tadamasa (1853-1906) who was at the Paris Exhibition as the company interpreter but had left the company soon after the exhibition. In 1882 Wakai and Hayashi both left Kiritsu Kôshô Kaisha and established a partnership in Paris as Wakai Hayashi Company, which lasted two years. One of their main trading items was *ukiyo*-e (Japanese woodblock prints); *ukiyo*-e prints which are now found in private and public collections in the Western countries often bear one or two of their seals. Hayashi eventually became independent, and after his

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50. The 1897 *Ôshû hakurankai sandô kiyô* records that a British firm called Alexander Park approached the Japanese delegates at the Vienna Exhibition and offered to buy the whole of the Japanese garden and the buildings which were set up at the exposition site (vol.I, pp.46-47). According to Hida, the offer by Alexander Park was the direct cause of the establishment of the Kiritsu Kôshô Kaisha as the government vehicle to handle 'art and craft' export products, in 1873. Its business was started with the opening of the shop in Asakusa in 1874 (Hida, *Meiji-no Yushutsu Kôgei Zuan*, Kyoto Shoin, pp.341-45).
51. Suzuki, *Meiji-no Sôshoku Kôgei*, p.6.

involvement in the 1900 Paris Exhibition, he remained in Paris until 1905 (see below).

The number of named craftsmen who worked for Kiritsu Kôshô Kaisha, according to Hida, was 129, but this figure does not include their unnamed assistants.[52] The artisans (*shokunin*) included those whose works came to be regarded as some of the finest examples of Meiji crafts.[Figs.27-8] They were either employed at the workshop or accepted orders from the company.[53] The company produced a variety of craftworks such as lacquerware stationery boxes (which were decorated with *maki-e* or inlay technique or both), decorative objects, clocks, paintings, scrolls, tableware (Japanese and Western), vases and so on. An emphasis on fine skills was a major characteristic of Meiji crafts, and it was also a major attraction in the overseas market. The company products often passed through the hands of many artisans with their respective skills; for example, a designer's design for a *maki-e* stationery box may have gone through a woodwork specialist, a lacquer specialist and a *maki-e* specialist. This system of division of labour was also adopted by private workshops and companies operating at the time.[54]

2-4. Efforts for preservation and development of crafts: nationalism from the late 1880s

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52. Hida, *Meiji-no Yushutsu Kôgei Zuan*, p.356.
53. Hida, *Meiji-no Yushutsu Kôgei Zuan*, p.356.
54. Hida lists sixteen private organisations including: Kishi Kôkei's Seikôsha, Miyagawa Kôzan's workshop, Kôransha (porcelain), Kutani Tôki (ceramics) and Harlens (cloisonné) (Hida, p.372-76).

It has generally been regarded that foreign employees of the government, particularly Ernest Fenollosa, were responsible for turning the tide of the government's attitudes in art in the 1880s from 'Western worship' to nationalism, by preaching the superiority of Japanese art to that of the West. Recently, however, scholars have been challenging this 'established' view. In his recent book entitled *Fenollosa: 'Nihon Bijutsu-no Onjin' no Kage-no Bubun* (1989), Hosaka Kiyoshi argues that Fenollosa was not a benefactor of traditional Japanese art, but, rather, was 'made' into one by the Japanese government. It was, Hosaka claims, part of the government's strategy to promote traditional values in order to control some aspects of Western culture, in particular Christianity and democracy. Western science and technology were welcome, but not so the ideas that could challenge the authority of the Emperor and his government. In developing industries to accumulate national wealth and raise Japan's international status, so as to equal the advanced nations of the West as quickly as possible, the government could not allow Christianity and the idea of democracy to intervene in its policies. That Edward Morse was a Darwinist and Fenollosa advocated Spencer's Social Darwinism, and that both were employed to teach future rulers of Japan, Hosaka claims, should be seen in this context.[55] Furthermore, the role Fenollosa played in promoting traditional Japanese art was carefully

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55. Hosaka, pp.67-93.

calculated both by him and the Japanese government:

> The important thing is [to understand] that the greatest merit of the Meiji government and the people around it lies in the fact that they used Fenollosa, a foreign employee, to appeal for the integrity of Japanese art against Western art to the Japanese people, rather than to the outsiders. And Fenollosa, in turn, gained points with the government, and as a result managed to survive in Japan while many other foreign employees were dismissed. He remained as a professor for the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and an officer for the National Museum.[56]

Although Hosaka's view is a radical one, it explains the major 'contradiction' concerning Fenollosa, that is, the fact that he bought a large number of Japanese art objects and sold them to the Boston Museum and private collectors while working for the Japanese government to 'preserve and protect' Japanese art.[57] Hosaka's view that the Japanese government needed traditional art to promote Imperial Japan, is an important point for the purpose of the present study:

> My opinion is that Japan around the time of Fenollosa's arrival (1878) desperately lacked a central philosophy on which to base the governing of the country while the framework of an imperial bureaucratic system was still shaky. In such an environment, the government had many contradictions, and confusion within itself; its authority was yet to be established and social discontentment prevailed. To prove this, one may look at the number of political assassinations and attempted assassinations, which rose extremely high at this time... the future of the imperial nation seemed troubled and uncertain. From the rulers' viewpoint, any additional system that would strengthen or support the central Imperial system was welcome.
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> When one sees Japanese art from such a viewpoint, one can understand that it was the best form with which Japanese sentiment and ideas were visually represented. To protect it, recognise it and use it for national purposes was an urgent task that the

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56. Hosaka, p.170.
57. Hosaka, pp.27-8 and pp.29-65.

government had to tackle.[58]

The increasing outflow and the local destruction of art and craft objects were serious problems. Foreign employees such as Morse and Fenollosa took advantage of the low prices of traditional art and craft objects and of their high salary to collect vast amounts and send them off overseas.[59] Trading houses and merchants also actively sold traditional art and craft objects as well as contemporary ones. In the 1890s Hayashi Tadamasa was based in Paris and traded actively. Kobayashi Bunshichi (1861-1923), known as a connoisseur and the biggest merchant of *ukiyo-e*, had a shop in America and was well acquainted with Fenollosa, Morse, Bigelow and Charles Freer.[60] Samuel Bing (1838-1905) was also a well-known trader of Japanese art in Europe.

In 1879 the government organised a survey trip to determine objects which were worth protecting. The special party of twelve comprised government Printing Office personnel, including Edoardo Chiossone, photography technicians, and an antique valuer. They travelled from

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58. Hosaka, pp.63-64.
59. Fenollosa's starting salary as a professor at the Tokyo University in 1878 was 300 yen a month. According to Hosaka, a Japanese professor's salary at the time was around 100 yen (p.19). In 1886, Fenollosa's salary at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts was 6000 yen a year, half of the School's annual budget. While the large size of the salary indicates his 'usefulness' to the government, Hosaka suggests that such an extraordinary treatment may have aggravated others' resentment against him (p.207).
60. Segi Shin'ichi, *Seiki-no Dai-gashô*, Shinshindô, Kyoto, pp.101-110.

Tokyo through central Japan, then to Nagoya, Kyoto and the Osaka area. They visited historic sites, important temples, shrines and Imperial tombs, taking photos and recording objects. The trip took almost five months and a catalogue of description, photos, drawings and prints was produced and published in 1883.[61] The research trip set a precedent for other similar projects involving Okakura Tenshin and Fenollosa in 1884 and 1886. The famous uncovering of the Yumedono Kannon, the hidden treasure of Hôryûji, was one of many results of the projects. In 1888, the government again sent Fenollosa, Okakura Tenshin, Kuki Ryûichi, Hamao Arata and others for a four-month trip to Kyoto, Osaka, Nara, Shiga and Wakayama prefectures for a thorough investigation of old art objects.[62] After their return, the *Rinji Zenkoku Hômotsu Torishirabe kyoku* (Temporary National Treasure Investigation Bureau) was set up with Kuki Ryûichi as the chief. The Bureau made records of the investigation and issued certificates for high quality objects. Its work eventually led to the enactment of the *Koshaji Hozon Hô* (Old Shrines and Temples Preservation Law) in 1897 and the establishment of the National Treasure (*Kokuhô*) scheme.[63]

A strong advocate for the preservation, appreciation and

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61. Urasaki, pp.133-5.
62. Before this trip, Fenollosa had made private trips: first to central Japan in 1880 on his own; in 1882 he re-visited the area then later in the year he went around Japan with Morse and Bigelow; in 1884 he again took Bigelow to central Japan (Hosaka, pp.11-12).

63. Urasaki, pp.182-3.

development of Japan's own art and craft in the 1880s was Ryûchikai, a group of intellectuals close to the government, led by Sano Tsunetami. From his experience in international exhibitions, Sano recognised the high quality of Japanese products by international standards. On his return from the Vienna Exhibition in 1873, Sano organised a group for the collection, display and study of old Japanese art. This group became the basis for Ryûchikai which was founded around 1879, 'to promote the unique art of Japan and continue to propagate its quality throughout the world.'[64] Its major members were those who had experienced international exhibitions: Sano Tsunetami (President), Kuki Ryûichi (Vice President), Matsuo Gisuke and Wakai Kenzaburô of Kiritsu Kôshô Kaisha, Kawase Hideharu, Yamataka Nobutsura, Shioda Makoto, Hirayama Narinobu (government officials), Yamamoto Gorô, Nôtomi Sukejirô, Kishi Kôkei (designer), and Ômori Tadanaka. The members met once a month, and organised speeches and displays of objects for appreciation. Ryûchikai also issued a monthly newsletter called *Ryûchikai Hôkoku* (Ryûchikai Report) in which the members raised and discussed problems of the art industry. Shioda Makoto, for example, pointed out five areas in which Japan was behind developed countries in the healthy development of an art and craft export industry: lack of capital, inexperience in international trade, an inadequate local

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64. 'Revised Rules of Ryûchikai', in *Dai Nippon Bijutsu Shinpô* (reprint), vol.1, Yumani Shobô, 1990, betw. p.22 & p.23; also in Urasaki, p.96. The founding year of Ryûchikai varies according to different sources. See Hosaka, p.155, for different dates.

transport system, lack of overseas offices and lack of large factories to cope with orders.[65] In January 1883, Ryûchikai expanded its activities and amended its rules. The new rules revealed a sense of urgency in the face of a continued neglect and deterioration of traditional craft. It also organised two exhibitions of Japanese painting in Paris in 1883 and 1884. The exhibitions failed, however: none of the works sold.[66]

The nationalist trend, or Japanisation as it is sometimes called, followed the Westernisation period. It may be seen simply as a reaction against the rapid Westernisation. As Nagai Michio points out in his study of the history of the Japanese education system during the Meiji period, however, the two trends were not antagonistic:

> no matter how strong the external pressure, the non-Western world cannot be transformed into a perfect facsimile of the West. When these societies come under strong pressure from the West, their cultural traditions resist rapid change, and yet they are forced, for their own survival, to seek to develop their own approach to modernization through rapid self-transformation.[67]

In the world of art, too, the shift of emphasis from the West to Japanese tradition during the late 1880s should be

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65. Ikegami Chûji, 'Bankoku-haku jidai-no kôgei', in Kaneko, *Meiji-no Sôshoku Kôgei*, p.119.
66. The paintings that Ryûchikai sent to Paris were *nihon-ga* only. Although *ukiyo-e* continued to attract a high demand, the genre was not regarded as 'high art' by Ryûchikai.
67. Nagai, 'Westernisation and Japanisation: The early Meiji transformation of education', in Shively, *Tradition and Modernization in Japanese Culture*, p.37.

seen as a stage of the trial-and-error modernisation process. The extent of the sway on one side or the other often seems to depend on whoever happened to exercise influence at the time. At any rate, the sway towards traditional art seems to be the major cause of the closure in 1882 of the *Kôbu Bijutsu Gakkô* (Ministry of Works' Technical Art School), the first art school of the government to teach oil painting, under an Italian painter Fontanesi (1818-82).[68] The school had been established since 1876 (teaching began in 1877) under the jurisdiction of the Department of Works. It seems oil painting was taught not so much to introduce Western aesthetics as part of technical training. Aoki Shigeru points out:

> What Japan needed then was not the naturalism of the Barbizon or Romanticist schools but the precise drawing techniques using the science of chiaroscuro and perspective, and the orthodox oil painting style based on them.[69]

By the time the next government art school was founded in 1888 (teaching began in 1889) as the *Tokyo Bijutsu Gakkô* (Tokyo School of Fine Arts), the tide had turned. Under the strong initiative of Okakura Tenshin, a pupil and

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68. Fontanesi's career in Italy and the events leading to his appointment is described in Aoki Shigeru (ed.), *Fontanesi to Kôbu Bijutsu Gakkô*, Shibundô, 1978. His early departure from Japan (he resigned from his position at the school in 1878, after only two years' teaching) is attributed to his illness, but Hosaka holds the view that it was also related to the change of political climate (*Fenollosa*, pp.175-76).
69. Aoki, *Fontaneji to Kôbu Bijutsu Gakkô*, Shibundô, pp.35-36. Although the Industrial Art School existed for the short period of six years, some of its students such as Yamamoto Hôshin, Goseda Yoshimatsu, Asai Chû and Koyama Shôtarô later became the early leaders in Japanese oil painting.

close friend of Fenollosa's, oil painting was excluded from the teaching curriculum.[70]

Another development in this period was the holding of the first *Kan-ko Bijutsukai* (Society for Viewing of Old Art), a government exhibition of antique art objects established to promote public appreciation of national art. The exhibition, held in 1880, consisted of five sections: Painting, Lacquer, Textile, Sculpture/carving and Ceramics. Four members of the hanging committee were appointed for each section except the Lacquer section, which had five examiners.[71] From the second exhibition, *Ryûchikai* took over its administration and held the exhibition each year.

The export-based push for craft production was responsible for two negative factors which developed during this period: the emphasis in production was concentrated on the increase in quantity, while little attention was paid to the quality side; and the dependence on the precarious

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70. There are numerous writings on Okakura Kakuzô (known as Okakura Tenshin) from different viewpoints. A general view, such as that of Ishii Hakutei (artist and art critic during the first decades of this century), is that Okakura was a traditionalist and, although he had made immeasurable contributions to traditional art, was nevertheless 'backward-looking', particularly in his dislike of Western-style painting (*Nihon Kaiga Sandai-shi*, Pericansha, 1983 (originally published in 1942), pp.70-83. As to Okakura and Fenollosa, Hosaka shows, in his book *Fenollosa*, the development of their relationship in the context of the changing environment which first brought them close together yet later alienated them.

71. Urasaki, pp.99-100.

overseas market created rapid vicissitudes for some industries.[72]

From around the Second Domestic Exhibition in 1881, the government began to promote local crafts through encouragement of local administrations to cooperate in holding combined industrial shows, to which the government sent examiners.[73] The regional guild system was also adopted. The heads of prefectures, particularly those with traditional crafts such as Kyoto, initiated regional development of their craft industry. They also introduced regulations in order to deal with the problem of inferior quality large-scale production, which was quickly damaging Japan's reputation overseas. New techniques were developed in different crafts. Western techniques were also imported and adopted.

The efforts based on nationalist consciousness, led by the government or groups such as Ryûchikai, resulted to a certain extent in a successful revival of quality craft. On the other hand, they prevented a modern development of craft. Suzuki Kenji points out that when the Tokyo School of Fine Arts opened in 1889, the initial plan to include a design department (*zuan-ka*) was dropped and replaced by the *bijutsu-kôgei-ka* (Department of Art Craft).[74] Suzuki argues that the change reflected the attitude of Okakura

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72. See, for example, the *gechô* (the ivory carving) industry in Urasaki PP.154-161 and 291-298.
73. Urasaki, p.163.
74. For the concept of artistic craft, see section 5 below.

Tenshin, a prominent advocate of the superiority of traditional Japanese art, who held that the uniqueness of Japanese art lay in the fact that art and craft were unified and indistinguishable while in Europe craft was separated from and made subordinate to art.[75]

One major development during this period was the separation of industrial (mass-produced) crafts on the one hand, and on the other, 'art craft' in which craftsmen tested their mettle against one another.

'Art craft' consisted of often very intricate (and therefore expensive) pieces which were presented in the name of the company (such as Kiritsu Kôshô Kaisha), dealer or producer.[Figs.29-30] The production process required several different types of skilled craftsmen. Despite their magnificence, they failed to maintain their initial attraction to Western buyers. In 1889, Bigelow warned that while Japanese did well with cheap and practical art craft products (such as *uchiwa*, or round fans) because they were of good quality, expensive lacquerware and other items which the Westerners could not use, were not wanted. Bigelow thus urged Japanese craft producers to concentrate on cheap and practical items of good quality, rather than expensive decorative pieces which only a handful of rich collectors would want.[76]

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75. Okakura regarded the period around the Tenpyô era (729-49) as the 'golden age' of Japanese art, and went even to an extreme as to design a Tenpyô-style loose cloak as the uniform for the Art School.
76. *Kokka*, no.1, 1889, pp.9-11.

Some intellectuals who were open to Western concepts and were practical in terms of seeing craft as an export industry, formed a strong trend in opposition to Kuki, Okakura and other traditionalists and insisted on dividing art from craft at international and domestic exhibitions. The first of such exhibitions was l'exposition universelle of 1900.

The Paris Exhibition of 1900 was a watershed in the changing concept of craft in Japan. Hayashi Tadamasa emerged as a champion of the new cause. As an art trader in Paris, he was sensitive to the emergence of Art Nouveau in Europe and also the changing demand for Japanese products. Hayashi insisted that:

> According to the rules of the French art world, truly artistic works are products in which the artist employed his own philosophy and creativity from the initial idea to the finish. Works that were made to other people's designs, therefore, are considered to be craft to which art was applied, and their excellence is regarded as that of craft rather than art, however splendid it may be.'[77]

On Hayashi's appointment as the Japanese Chief Secretary for the Paris International Exhibition, the submission rules, which had already been issued, were amended. Both the original and the amended versions are recorded in the *Rinji Hakurankai Jimukyoku Hôkoku* (Report of the Temporary Exhibition Secretariat) published in 1902. The original Clause 1 of Article 2 of the submission rules said, 'Art objects are limited to those that demonstrate individual excellence while retaining the Japanese spirit.' This was

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77. Quoted in Suzuki Kenji, 1980, p.8.

changed to: 'A work of art should be based on the principles of pure art and should exhibit the artist's own design and techniques. Exhibits, therefore, are limited to the artist's original creation.'[78] In addition, the words *bijutsu kôgei* (art craft) was changed to *yûtô kôgei* (superior craft), excluding the word 'art' from crafts.[79]

Hayashi's appointment as the Chief Secretary was unprecedented. The position had always been held by government officials and the regulations had to be specially changed for the appointment. According to Kigi Yasuko, this appointment was made possible by progressive senior government officials such as Saionji Kinmochi, who later became prime minister. Some of these powerful officials knew Hayashi personally from the time they spent in Paris and were well aware of his knowledge of both the Japanese and Western art markets. What is important here is that the appointment meant that from this time on, the concept of craft in Japan followed that of European definitions which regarded craft as subordinate to art.[80] This was the concept against which the following generation of Japanese craft artists had to fight.

Despite Hayashi's efforts, the Paris Exhibition was a disappointment for the government. *Japonisme* was already

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78. *1900-nen Pari Bankoku Hakurankai Rinji Hakurankai Jimukyoku Hôkoku*, 2 vols., Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, 1902, vol.1, pp.667 & 674.
79. *Rinji Hakurankai Jimukyoku Hôkoku* vol.1, p.674.
80. See Suzuki, *Genshoku Gendai Nihon-no Bijutsu: Kôgei*, vol.14, Shôgakukan, Tokyo, 1980, p.134.

a thing of the past in Europe and Art Nouveau was at its height. In the waves of new designs, Japanese exhibits seemed stale and anachronistic.

2-5. Art and Craft

Recent studies have established that the word *bijutsu* (art), first appeared in 1871 as the translation of 'Schöne Kunst'.[81] The word emerged after much discussion about the translation of the classification of exhibits sent from Austria with the Austrian government's invitation to the International Exhibition in 1873. Because it was a new word, it was accompanied by a note when it was first used in this context: 'denotes the Western word for music, painting or sculpture and study of poetry etc.'[82]

The origin of the word *kôgei* (craft) as used in Chinese goes back a long time, but it had been unfamiliar in Japan. Until close to the end of the nineteenth century, the Japanese word included industrial products as well as traditional hand-crafted objects, apparently reflecting the pre-industrial modes of production in the country. Thus, when writing *Jikki*, Kume Kunitake was not always clear when choosing the words *kôgei*, *bijutsu* and *geijutsu* to describe specific categories: he uses *kôgei* to mean manufacturing industry and arts in general ('Today all

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81. See for example: Kitazawa, *Me-no Shinden*, 1989, pp.139-145. Suzuki Kenji gives a good survey of changing concept of *bijutsu* and *Kôgei*, with emphasis on the latter (1980, pp.130-5).
82. Extract in Urasaki, p.601.

European countries enjoy brilliance of civilisation, their strength at its height, their trade thriving and their *kôgei* excellent'). He uses the word *bijutsu* only when referring to fine arts ('Paintings in the way of *bijutsu* are in the upper floor [of the South Kensington Museum]'). And he seems to use *geijutsu*, when referring to works of aesthetic quality ('They teach production of *geijutsu* at the affiliated school').[83]

The word *bijutsu* is the combination of *bi* and *jutsu*, meaning beauty and technique or skill respectively.[84] As the term became more widely used, this caused some confusion, as Suzuki points out. The term was often taken for its literary meaning and interpreted as 'skill to create beautiful objects', and 'beautiful' simply as 'visually pleasing', thus mixing heavily decorated objects with works of art.[85] The 'Art' section of the first Domestic Exhibition of 1877 was noted as 'all objects that show refinement and subtlety' and consisted of:

(1) Sculpture
(2) Painting (including *maki*-e and painted ceramics)
(3) Prints

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83. Kume, *Jikki*, vol.2, ch.23, p.53. Suzuki claims that Kume uses *Kôgei* only as industry (*Kôgei*, 1980, p.131), but a closer examination will reveal that he uses the word for both industry and arts. For heavier industry, he also uses *Kôgyô* (eg. vol. 2, ch. 23, p.54). This seems to suggest that *Kôgei* was used in his report sometimes in Japanese sense, and sometimes as a translation of 'craft' in English and other European languages.
84. Today the word *bijutsu* denotes visual art and the word *geijutsu* is used for liberal arts. The latter also implies a certain value which is equivalent to Collingwood's and Passmore's definition of 'art' and 'serious art' respectively.
85. *Genshoku Gendai Nihon-no Bijutsu: Kôgei*, p.133.

(4) Photographs
(5) Architectural plans and models (including interior design)
(6) Decorated objects (including ceramics, glass, inlaid work and tortoise-shell works)[86]

By the third Domestic Exhibition of 1890, held after the introduction of the Department of Art Craft in the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, the 'Art' section consisted of subsections as follows:

(1) Painting
(2) Sculpture
(3) Architecture and Landscape Gardening
(4) Art Industry (*bijutsu kôgyô*)
    1. Lacquerware
    2. Metalwork
    3. Ceramics, Glass and Cloisonné
    4. Weaving and sewn objects
    5. Furniture
    6. Miscellaneous art industry
    7. Designs for art industry
(5) Prints, Photography and Calligraphy.[87]

Some important discussions concerning the meaning and use of the term 'art' took place around this time.[88] The general situation, however, was described by Hayashi Tadamasa in 1890:

> It seems that now the translated word *bijutsu* has become popular in our country, one hears people talking about it as if everything from painting, calligraphy and antiques to ordinary practical objects are referred to as such. In extreme cases, some people claim that all Japanese are artists, Japan is a country of art, its people are uniquely excellent and that Japan is an honoured land like no other in the world. As for the definition of art, or what art is, however, few people give much thought to it... Our art gallery (*bijutsukan*) appears to be a

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86. Aoki Shigeru and Sakai Tadayasu, *Kindai Nihon Shisô Taikei: Bijutsu*, Iwanami Shoten, 1989, pp.405-6.
87. Aoki and Sakai, *Bijutsu*, p.407.
88. The earliest major work on aesthetics was 'Bimyôgakusetsu' (Aesthetics) written by Nishi Amane (1829-97) in the 1870s, soon after the introduction of the new word *bijutsu*. An account of a history of aesthetics in Japan, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis.

> gallery of fine art, like those in the West, only in name, but in reality it contains applied arts - pure crafts - as well.[89]

One of the problems may have been that when *bijutsu* was defined to include painting, it was thought that 'picture' (image, painting and drawing) would be part of it. Thus *maki-e* and ceramics painting were included in *bijutsu*, as seen in the classification of the first Domestic Exhibition.

As at 1890 the official term for craft objects, as indicated in the above classification of the third Domestic Exhibition, was 'art industry' (*bijutsu kôgyô*). 'Art craft' (*bijutsu kôgei*) was also used almost as synonymous with 'art industry', the latter with a stronger emphasis on the artistic quality than the former, as exemplified in the Art Craft Department of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts.

Late in the century, there was increasing pressure from the West to divide Japanese exhibits into art and craft categories for international exhibitions. The nationalist camp in the art world, headed by Okakura Tenshin, insisted that the uniqueness of Japanese art rested on the fact that there was no distinction between art and craft, and refused to introduce the separate classifications. As Suzuki points out, however, when Japanese crafts were exhibited as art among the works of art from other

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89. 'Tonoyama Hakushi-no Enzetsu-o Yomu', record of speech made in May 1890, in Aoki and Sakai, *Bijutsu*, pp.153-4.

countries, the lack of creative consciousness among the Japanese craft producers inevitably created problems.[90] Eventually, the more realistic (that is, realistic to the reception of Japanese products in Western markets) group won. Hayashi Tadamasa, who owned a shop in Paris, was a prominent figure in this context. The Paris Exhibition of 1900 was the turning point. As Suzuki puts it:

> The modern European notion of art and creativity and classification became firmly established. As a result, mechanical industry [*kôgyô*] became an independent category, and art and craft were now separated. Thus, without logical verification, craft has come to be identified as an area between mechanical industry and art, where the two vaguely overlap.[91]

This was the situation of craft around 1900. Craft was given a subordinate position to that of art, that is, painting and sculpture, although the latter too had to go through the process of its own modernisation in the Japanese context.

Around 1910, with the emergence of craft artists who took up craft as art and as a means of self-expression, a new term - *kôgei bijutsu* (craft art) - appeared, to express the artistic quality of objects made in craft materials. The term continued to be used alongside *kôgei* for a few decades until after the Pacific War, when the emphasis on the artistic values of craft became unnecessary and the word *kôgei* absorbed the concept of *kôgei bijutsu*.

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90. Suzuki, *Kôgei*, p.133.
91. Suzuki, *Kôgei*, p.134.

The changing terms and concepts of art and craft reflected the changing circumstances and consciousness of the administrators and the people in the industry. The craft objects themselves also underwent significant changes. The term *kôgei bijutsu* (craft art) of the 1920s emphasised artistic quality in crafts, but it was not in the same sense as Okakura insisted in the 1880s. Craft artists, the core producers of craft art, did not rely on art critics to defend them. Instead, they fought against two enemies: to gain recognition of craft as art from outside the industry, and to overcome the practice of simply following the old ways within the industry.

2-6. Emergence of new designs

Typical designs for Meiji export crafts, or *bijutsu kôgei*, were traditional subjects (birds, animals, insects, plants, etc.) drawn by *nihon-ga* artists or done in their style. In other words, they were an extension of Edo craft.[92] As the overseas demand for these designs dwindled, new currents which responded to the changing consciousness were emerging, first in the design area. This was largely in response to the need to revitalise the export industry, so the main motivators were commercial institutions and industrial education institutes. In 1893, the first graduate students left the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and entered the industry. Between 1897 and

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92. I am here largely referring to ceramics, lacquerwork and textiles. Of these, ceramics was the most important because it was not only the largest export category, but has always been a central concern for the Japanese, from ordinary wares to tea utensils.

1910, numerous local schools for craft and industry were established. Outside the area of education, study groups and associations of craftsmen were formed in search of new designs and concepts of craft. Two significant movements began in Kyoto. One was led by Nakazawa Iwata (1858-1943) and the artist Asai Chû (1856-1907) who had studied oil painting at the Art School of the Ministry of Works Technical College. As professor of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, Asai was appointed an inspector for the 1900 Exhibition and was sent to Paris. There he met Nakazawa, who had studied under Wagener and become the principal of the newly established Kyoto University of Science and Engineering. He was in Paris in preparation for the opening of the *Kyoto Kôgei Kôtô Gakkô* (Kyoto High School of Crafts) as well as for the Exhibition. Nakazawa invited Asai to join him as a design teacher and as head teacher.

The Kyoto High School of Crafts was established as the first specialist craft school in Japan, aiming at training students as managers, technicians and educators in the field of crafts, in which Kyoto had a rich tradition. The school consisted of design, dyeing and machinery divisions and adopted a policy that all experimental products were to be sold, a part of its educational principle of teaching students always to consider the market when producing a piece of work. It also adopted an artistic

education for craftsmen.[93] Asai and his colleagues such as Takeda Goichi (architect and designer, 1872-1938) and Tsurumaki Tsuruichi (dyeing, 1873-1942) actively studied Western art, particularly the Art Nouveau and Secession styles, and introduced them in their work.[Fig.31] As well as teaching at the school, they organised design associations and study groups, producing fresh designs for craft.

The other movement was led by Kamisaka Sekka (1866-1942), a pupil of Kishi Kôkei (1840-1922).[94] While Asai Chû and his group adopted Western designs, Kamisaka set out to modernise traditional craft designs, particularly in lacquerware.[95][Fig.32] From 1900, Kamisaka taught design at the Kyoto School of Art and Craft, which had initially been founded as Kyoto School of Painting in 1880. As in the case of the Kyoto High School of Crafts, it aimed at promoting cooperation and the development of local craft. It even adopted a system of providing designs for practising craftsmen.

In Tokyo, development was more directly commercial. Perhaps one of the main figures of this transitional period towards individual expression was Sugiura Hisui (1876-1965), who studied Japanese-style painting at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, and became a designer strongly

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93. Satô Keiji, 'Asai Chû-to Kamisaka Sekka-no Kôgei Undô', *Meiji no Sôshoku Kôgei*, p.108.
94. See Appendix 2, under Kamisaka Sekka.
95. Kamisaka was critical of Art Nouveau, claiming that it was not 'a true art' (Satô, pp.112-3).

influenced by Art Nouveau.[Fig.33] Sugiura then became a designer for Mitsukoshi, an upmarket trend-setting shop during the Taishô and prewar Shôwa periods.

So, the first step of the modernisation of craft design took place largely in the commercial sphere. But as far as the individual producer was concerned, no new consciousness had yet replaced the old. When *Bunten*, the national art exhibition organised by the government, was established in 1907, it excluded craft.[96] The Domestic Exhibition for Promotion of Industry ended with the fifth exhibition, held in Osaka, in 1903. After that, there was no regular venue to provide opportunities for recognition for craft producers until the first *Nôten* (Exhibition of Design and Applied Arts sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce) was held in 1913. Until the craft section was created in the eighth *Teiten* (the former *Bunten*) in 1927, craft was officially given a lower status than fine art. In the meantime, during the twenty years between the first *Bunten* (1907) and the eighth *Teiten* (1927), a major development in Japanese craft took place: namely the emergence of craft artists.

In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, Japanese craft mostly served as one of the main export categories providing foreign currency which Japan desperately needed. The mesmerising changes in the

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96. See Glossary for *kanten* (government-sponsored art exhibitions).

industry were thus imposed from outside, while the styles of craft essentially remained unchanged until around 1900. The real modernisation of Japanese craft only occurred after 1910 when an urge from within eventually broke the shell of the old styles. The change occurred hand in hand with the evolution of the concept of crafts.

CHAPTER THREE

The New Craft Movement and Various Modern Craft Theories

Art, culture and society in Japan went through radical changes during the 1910s and 1920s, beginning with Takamura Kôtarô's 'A Green Sun', published in *Subaru*, April 1910, and the publication of *Shirakaba*, which also began in April 1910. At the same time and in response to these changes, various craft theories developed. Central to these concerns were the ideas behind the *Shinkô Kôgei Undô* (New Craft Movement), which were closely connected to the development of art.[1] Also important was an ideology based on the tea ceremony tradition, which exercised a strong influence in determining an aesthetic standard through its connoisseurs called *me-kiki*. The last major trend, which was also fundamental to the concepts of Mingei, was the modern taste for primitive or peasant art.

3-1. The concept of craft before 1910

The concept of craft in modern Japan, as in the West, hast

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1. The term *shinkô kôgei undô* (New Craft Movement) is not an established historical term but rather a working term which the craft artists used to refer to their cause in the new artistic and practical direction of craft. I took the term largely from Fujii Tatsukichi's and Takamura Toyochika's writings.

carried a concept of 'utility' in one way or another. As a professor of philosophy at Tokyo University, Ernest Fenollosa argued in his *Bijutsu Shinsetsu* (Truth of Art), published in 1882, that the two characteristics of human products were usefulness and decoration, art being the latter. According to him, the two complement each other, because useful objects are beautiful by virtue of their usefulness while decoration (art) is useful because it raises human morality with its beauty.[2] This passage from Fenollosa was quoted by Tsubouchi Shôyô in his *Shôsetsu Shinzui*, which is generally regarded as the manifesto of modern Japanese literature. It can be assumed, therefore, that Fenollosa's concept of beauty and functionality was more or less accepted by Japanese intellectuals at the time. Or, it may be said that there was little reason to oppose it.

The first significant debate over art and craft took place around the turn of the century when the Japanese government authorities for the 1900 Paris International Exhibition introduced the Western classification of art and craft for the Japanese exhibits (see Chapter Two). Those who embraced Okakura's views on Japanese art being inseparable from craft (and vice versa) were defeated by the more realistic pro-Western camp headed in theory by Hayashi Tadamasa, though in reality by progressive businessmen, art administrators and the politicians who promoted him. But Okakura's camp was not defeated because

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2. In Aoki and Sakai, *Bijutsu*, 1989, p.37.

of any weakness in their theory. Rather, its defeat was due to the fact that the international situation demanded that Japan followed the convention of dividing its exhibits into art and craft, if it were to be recognised as an equal by the Western world.[3] It is no wonder, therefore, that the editorial of the *Nippon Bijutsu*, the magazine of Okakura Tenshin's *Nippon Bijutsu-in* (Japan Art Institute), bitterly argued:

> Clearly, the ultimate yardstick by which it is decided whether an object is art or non-art is 'utility'. In other words, if an object has a utilitarian purpose, it is excluded from art, while if it stands outside utility, as surplus, as it were, it will be classified as art. Therefore, items such as vases or pieces of *maki*-e will be excluded from art and classified as craft. A question is raised, however. How is an object which has both characteristics to be classified? A good example of this is our screens. How are they to be categorised? Which is regarded as more important, its function or the picture on the surface?... let me say this: the yardstick must be re-interpreted.[4]

The author of this article was quite right when he argued that it was impossible to separate art and craft, implying that most of Japanese traditional 'art' objects - paintings and sculpture - had the characteristic of both art and craft in the newly adopted classification. On the other hand, their lack of modern (i.e. Western) concepts

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3. Hayashi spoke in a newspaper interview in 1899 that problems arose from the confusion of different perceptions of art: in Japan the word was used in a broad sense while in the West it was used in a very narrow sense. Leaving aside the question of which is right, Hayashi argued, the Japanese should follow the other [Western] countries if they wished to be accepted by those countries (see Kigi Yasuko, *Hayashi Tadamasa-to sono Jidai: Seikimatsu-no Pari-to Japonizumu*, Chikuma Shobô, Tokyo, 1987, p.248).
4. *Nippon Bijutsu*, September 1899, p.23.

of art and craft caused a different kind of confusion. For example, the domestic exhibitions in the 1870s and 1880s created a situation which allowed a ceramics producer, for example, to submit his work either to the ceramics section if he wished it to be seen as a ceramic piece, or to the painting section if he wished the painting on the ceramic surface to be considered.[5]

Another tendency of the *Nippon Bijutsu* group, the older camp, was its perception of craft as skill: intricacy and technical perfection were greatly respected. An example of their bias towards skill can be observed in an article introducing new works. The article mentions the newly completed bronze equestrian statue of Kusunoki Masashige (a fourteenth century warrior) which was donated to the Imperial family by the Sumitomo industrialist family to commemorate the 200th anniversary of their copper mine. The original statue was carved in wood by Takamura Kôun, but in the article the statue is called a work by Okazaki Sessei, who did the casting.[6] The article also refers to an earlier statue of Saigô Takamori, another casting work by Okazaki, and again Kôun's name is not mentioned. Although Okazaki was responsible for bringing Western techniques into the Kusunoki Masashige project, for which the existing technology had proven insufficient, it was

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5. Yamazaki Tsuyoshi, curator of the Osaka City Museum, drew my attention to this point which he had made in following articles of his in catalogues of exhibition at the museum: *Tekisutairu Aato 100: Kindai Nihon-no Shitsunai Sôshoku Orimono*, 1994, p.54; *Kôgeika-tachi no Meiji Ishin*, 1992, pp.15-20.
6. *Nippon Bijutsu*, no.2, November 1898, p.25.

surprising for later generations to find that the original carver's name was not mentioned at all in the contemporary art magazine.[7] But this bias towards skill is in fact stated in the first issue of the magazine: 'To begin with, study of art and art craft would not be effective unless it is based on practical skill.'[8]

The significance of this attitude is that it was reflected in the production of 'art craft'. A highly respected lacquerware craftsman, for instance, executed a design which was made by someone else. As Fujii Tatsukichi wrote in 1930, 'there was a time when craft was thought to be the practice of executing a given design.'[9] This perception of craft as skill underlay the general concept of craft, as against painting and sculpture in which the same artist designed and executed a piece of work. This general concept and the accepted practice of division of labour among many major craft producers were some of the major problems faced by the craft artists who strove for the recognition of craft as creative art.

As the most pressing aspect of craft in the Meiji period was the need to exploit its export potential, there was serious concern when Japanese exhibits failed to perform to the general expectations at the Paris International

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7. Takamura Kôtarô remembered seeing his father's wood carving of the original statue on display in the Imperial Palace, where the Emperor had viewed it (*Takamura Kôtarô Senshû* 5), p.184.
8. *Nippon Bijutsu, no.1,* October 1898, p.8.
9. *Bijutsu Kôgei-no Tehodoki*, Hakubunkan, 1930, p.13.

Exhibition of 1900. The official report on the Japanese exhibits sounds a disappointing note, pointing out, for example, three aspects in which Japanese ceramics were inferior to others: uneven surface, monotonous shape and old-fashioned designs. It also adds a reaction in a French newspaper that the colours in Japanese ceramics are often too dark, arousing an aversion to them.[10] Similar criticisms are also directed at other crafts: many lacquerware products were 'impractical and luxurious items' and metalwork decorative vases were 'mostly similar in shape, with no indication of efforts', while their decorations were 'monotonous in disposition and pattern structure'.[11]

In 1904 Fukuchi Fukuichi summed up the situation, writing that Japanese art craft had become outdated in the previous seven to eight years while new designs were being developed in Europe and America in response to new tastes and technology. He complained that few Japanese craftsmen were attempting to overcome the problem.[12]

Because the main concern was to revitalise export, discussion of 'function' of craft tended to be based on its use by Western consumers rather than by the Japanese public. So the solution was sought in producing objects that were useful in Western-style living, with designs to

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10. *1900-nen Pari Bankoku Hakurankai Rinji Hakurankai Jimukyoku Hôkoku*, vol.1, pp.492-3.
11. *Rinji Hakurankai Jimukyoku Hôkoku*, p.493 & p.495.
12. *Bijutsu Shinpô*, 20th August, 1904.

respond to Western taste. With some exceptions, mass production of crafts that are suitable for the demand of the domestic market, of the emerging new urban middle-class population, had to wait for the development of industrial design in the 1920s.

The 'dark' impression of the Japanese crafts seems to have come from the fact that they were exhibited alongside British and French crafts at the exhibition. The aesthetic movement in Britain from the 1870s, symbolised by sunflower patterns, had considerably brightened the decorative arts, while French Art Nouveau introduced a strong sense of movement in design.[13] In comparison, the Japanese crafts, which largely concentrated on the skilled execution of intricate patterns, would have appeared dark and boring. *Kôgei bijutsu*, the decorative crafts of the Meiji period, were products of the transition period during which the Japanese authorities and producers were adjusting themselves both to the newly imported concept '*bijutsu* - art' and to the industrial development, which turned many traditional hand-crafts into mechanical industries. The literal interpretation of the word *bijutsu* as 'skills in making beautiful objects' had brought about products decorated with *nihon-ga* style 'pictures' rather than 'patterns' as the mainstream decoration of craft, a tendency reinforced by its success

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13. For the aesthetic movement, see Elizabeth Aslin, *The Aesthetic Movement*, Elec Books, London, 1969; Mark Girouard, *Sweetness and Light: The 'Queen Anne' Movement 1860-1900*, Oxford University Press, London, 1977.

in previous international exhibitions (as *Japonisme*) and by the nationalist movement of the 1880s.

The new design movements after 1900 - led by Nakazawa Iwata, Asai Chû, Kamisaka Sekka and others (see Chapter Two) - were attempts at re-evaluating the concept by reintroducing 'patterns' coordinated with the shape and function of objects in craft decoration. But their efforts seemed not to satisfy some critics. By the early 1910s a progressive art critic of *Bijutsu Shinpô*, in an article entitled 'Our Art Crafts Demand New Brains', continued to lament the poor efforts on the part of the contemporary craft producers:

> The style of these new works is simply a continuation of the old, their subject matter commonplace and boring, and their application limited to tradition. When some new ideas are observed, they are only superficial imitations of Western styles... For new craft to be created, we need fresh brains that will create new craft according to their own taste.[14]

Although criticisms were abundant, few people around this time ventured into defining the nature of craft in relation to art. In other words, once the Western concept of craft being subordinate to art had settled into Japan, the problems and struggles of Western craft producers also came with it.[15] With the emergence of craft artists, however, the nature and functions of craft underwent fresh

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14. Sakai Yoshisaburô, *Bijutsu Shinpô*, vol.11, no.2, December 1911, p.1.
15. I am referring specifically to the craftspeople of the Arts and Crafts Movement in Britain, although the nature of their problems was as different from the Japanese producers as were their respective history and circumstances.

examination in the following decades.

As Sakai claimed in 1911, for new concepts of craft to be born, 'new brains' or a new generation of producers were needed. As in the case of the Creative Print Movement, the transition was brought about by the first graduates of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, who responded to the general need for 'fresh blood', as it were. Major craft artists in this category were Itaya Hazan (1872-1963, ceramics), Katori Hozuma (1874-1954, metal casting) and Tsuda Shinobu (1875-1946, metal casting). They graduated from the School around the turn of the century, and established the mainstream of academic craft in the following decades.

Itaya studied sculpture as there was no course in ceramics when he was a student. On graduation, he taught at other schools until 1896, when he moved to Kanazawa. Kanazawa was well known for crafts, particularly for a type of ceramics called Kutani ware, porcelain with patterns in overglaze enamel. He experimented in ceramics for seven years before he moved to Tokyo and began firing at his own kiln. Working on bases shaped by his assistant, he developed his own style and techniques of ceramics, and is known particularly for his characteristic fine relief work with light, delicate colouring.[Fig.34] He won his first major prize at the Tokyo Domestic Exhibition in 1907. By 1911 Itaya Hazan was well established in mainstream ceramics.

Katori Hozuma remained at the School after graduation and taught metal casting. His interest was classical styles, and this was reflected in his work and attitudes.[Fig.35] But while Itaya and Katori were conservative in their approach to craft making, Tsuda Shinobu was progressive.[Fig.36] Tsuda also remained at the School after graduation in 1900, and became a professor in 1919. He encouraged his students to experiment in new forms and designs. His influence on the young students, including Takamura Toyochika, became particularly strong after he returned from a two-year period of study in Paris in 1925. A study group was formed around him which became the germ of the two groups *Mukei* (Formless) and *Jitsuzai Kôgei*, (Actuality Craft), each of which would become major forces in the New Craft Movement.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the New Craft Movement (*Shinkô Kôgei Undô*) was not a name for any single movement as such, but a general term for various modern developments in craft, involving the newly emerged craft artists insisting on creativity in their respective mediums. Concurrent with the new trends, the Imperial Craft Society was formed, aiming at efficiency in the production of practical craft to improve export. The various currents of the New Craft Movement and the government-led Imperial Craft Society were the two new streams of craft in the pre-war period. There was also a powerful conservative group headed by Itaya Hazan, Katori

Hozuma and others who had established themselves within the existing craft scene. The concepts of the New Craft Movement can be observed in the works and writings of three main craft artists: Tomimoto Kenkichi, Fujii Tatsukichi and Takamura Toyochika.

3-2. Tomimoto Kenkichi and his individualism in ceramics

Tomimoto Kenkichi was a major driving force in breaking the conventions of ceramics and transforming the ceramics tradition for the modern age. Born as the eldest son of a wealthy landlord in the ancient capital Nara, Tomimoto grew up with interests in mathematics, painting and music. In 1904 he entered the Design (*zuan*) course at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, where he studied pattern design, interior design, architecture and painting. Having finished his graduation work before the end of the school year, he went to England as a private student in 1908.[16] France was the common destination for Japanese art students, but Tomimoto chose England where his close friend Minami Kunzô and some senior students, as well as Professor Ôsawa from the School, were at the time.[17] Tomimoto was also attracted to England by his interest in

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16. Tomimoto's graduation work at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts was an architectural design of a musician's house (*Nihon-no Me-to Kûkan I*, p.142).
17. Takamura Kôtarô had left London for Paris in June 1908, before Tomimoto's arrival in London.

the ideas of Whistler and William Morris.[18]

In London, he studied stained-glass making in the evenings and spent the days visiting many of London's museums, particularly the South Kensington Museum. Late in 1909, Tomimoto was hired as an interpreter and photographic assistant by Dr Niinomi, an architectural engineer who had been sent by the Japanese government to study Islamic architecture in the Middle East and western Asia. They spent five months travelling from England to India via France and Cairo, during which Tomimoto copied many Indian and Islamic designs. On his return to Japan, Tomimoto wrote and published a two-part article on William Morris in *Bijutsu Shinpô* in 1912.[19] The article is significant because it was the first major introduction in Japan of Morris as an artist. It was also Tomimoto's first major publication. In it he not only gives an account of Morris's life and artistic activities, but also conveys deep sympathy for the Englishman.

With an implied reservation about Morris's wallpaper and

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18. Tomimoto, 'Rokudai Kanzan-to Liichi' 1933, in *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, Gogatsu Shobô, Tokyo, 1983, p.567. Although Tomimoto did not state it clearly, it is generally accepted that his interest in Morris was likely to have come from Iwamura Tôru, the professor of art history at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts between 1903 and 1916.
19. *Shirakaba* (1910-1923) never had an article on Morris. The magazine's only references to craft were Yanagi's comments on Tomimoto's pottery (May 1921) and a special issue on Choson ceramics, which was doubtlessly organised by Yanagi, featuring articles by Yanagi, Tomimoto and the Asagawa brothers (September 1922).

other patterns, Tomimoto writes that 'the noble taste of the serious and gentlemanly artist deeply impressed me.'[20] In later articles, he stated that Morris's designs lacked originality.[21] This was because Morris freely took motifs for his designs from medieval patterns. Nevertheless Tomimoto noted that 'in any of the patterns which bears his name, one sees that they had always touched his personality before they were made into a piece of work.'[22]

In narrating Morris's life and achievements, Tomimoto expressed his admiration for his fighting spirit in opposition to the poor contemporary taste; he praised the fact that Morris always believed in himself and was faithful to himself in whatever he took up. Tomimoto also admired Morris's skill in organising and running a business, his serious commitment to learning from the good art of the past, and his proud spirit - shown in the way he signed each work. Thus Tomimoto concludes this article:

> [Descriptions such as] 'the appeal of the artist's individuality' or 'things that are infinitely beautiful' must be recognised, not only in paintings and sculpture but also in weaving, metalwork and all other craft work. Morris was a forerunner, like no other, in perceiving this. And I feel that he showed us the way through his own practice.[23]

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20. 'Uiriamu Morisu-no Hanashi', *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, p.423. For convenience I will use this volume, where possible, to cite Tomimoto's writings, as it is a collection of most of his works.
21. For example, see 'Autobiography' in *Iroe-jiki: Tomimoto Kenkichi*, Japan Agency for Cultural Affairs, Tokyo, 1969, p.72.
22. 'Uiriamu Morisu-no Hanashi', p.438.
23. 'Uiriamu Morisu-no Hanashi', pp.445-6.

Tomimoto became aware of this concept while visiting the South Kensington Museum where he saw paintings such as Millet's *Woodcutters* or Burne-Jones's *Watermill* hanging alongside Persian pottery or Egyptian or Roman textiles, with equal respect paid to all objects.[24] In fact, the rest of Tomimoto's life seems to follow the path set by Morris.

It would be incorrect, however, to say that Tomimoto tried to become a Japanese Morris. Rather, he learned the concept of recognising beauty in craft works, which Morris had pioneered (as Tomimoto understood it), and took up the challenge of modernising Japanese craft. In one respect, he went further than Morris: while Morris looked back to the Middle Ages when, he considered, the supreme man-made beauty had been created, Tomimoto looked to the present and future.[25] On his return to Japan, he put the concept into practice, experimenting in furniture design and 'new craft'. The latter included pulling out his great-grandmother's old loom from the family storehouse and trying to weave.[26] Eventually, through the encounter with his lifelong friend and colleague Bernard Leach, Tomimoto took up ceramics, initially for fun, in 1912. He became

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24. 'Kôgeihin-ni Kansuru Shiki yori (From Personal Notes on Craft)', p.449.
25. I have discussed Morris's aesthetics in relation to those of Yanagi in my MA Preliminary thesis (1985). Although I have changed my views on Yanagi and his aesthetics, I still hold the same view on Morris.
26. Tomimoto wrote of Morris being first inspired in weaving when he saw a toy loom sold in the street ('Uiriamu Morisu-no Hanashi', *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, pp.435-6).

seriously involved in it, starting with raku ware and moving to pottery, porcelain, underglaze, overglaze enamel and gold and silver enamel wares.[Figs.37-9] Inui Yoshiaki, a craft historian who personally knew Tomimoto during his last ten years, claims that:

> It is no exaggeration to say that the core task in modernising ceramics, that is, to break through the practice of copying traditional styles and to establish the concept of originality, was first achieved by Tomimoto, and was achieved in a most spectacular manner.[27]

Tomimoto's account of how Morris took up making stained glass could also apply to his own discovery of ceramics:

> It must be noted that Morris, whose name will never be forgotten by any scholar of modern English stained glass, started with little technical experience and, relying solely on his own taste, taught himself and attained good results.[28]

Accordingly, when he began pottery Tomimoto chose not to take the conventional step of learning from a master potter, but to teach himself the necessary skills through his own trial and error as Morris had done, and through correspondence with Bernard Leach in Tokyo (Tomimoto initially acted as interpreter when Leach began pottery under the instruction from the VIth Kenzan, a lone potter).[29]

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27. *Tomimoto Kenkichi-ten*, Asahi Shinbunsha, 1986, p.171.
28. 'Uiriamu Morisu-no Hanashi', *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, p.433.
29. Ogata Ken'ya (Kenzan VI) was a successor of Ogata Kenzan (1663-1743), one of the most distinguished painter-potters in the Edo period (Mizuo Hiroshi, *Hyôden Yanagi Sôetsu*, Chikuma Shobô, Tokyo, 1993, p.58).

Apart from thus learning the techniques, Tomimoto faced two main problems. One was how to create his own work without following the conventions of pottery, and the other was his desire to produce affordable and beautiful ceramics for people's everyday use. The latter shows an aspect of Tomimoto as a social ideologist and his sympathy with William Morris's socialist ideals.[30]

In order to create his own ceramics, from the start Tomimoto recognised the need to devise his own pattern design. He wrote in 1914:

> From last spring on, I felt I was trapped in old patterns. Attempting to create new patterns somehow or other, I went on short trips and read books. From the spring to summer, I could not make one. I was so traumatised that I even thought of giving up art. I tried to forget old pattern designs completely and create my own through observing wild plants ... Even when I thought I had forgotten old patterns temporarily, twisted mixtures of old and new found their way into my drawing hand before I knew it. Since then, I have decided never to think of designing patterns in the studio, but always to take my drawing book outside to draw patterns.[31]

This approach to pattern-making developed into what is now known as Tomimoto's famous aphorism 'Never make patterns from patterns'. It was not easy, however. During the early years, he often poured out his heart in despair:

> How many times have I almost driven myself to the border of madness trying to break the comfortable shell around me which was called 'hobby work'! And

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30. In his dictated autobiography of 1969, Tomimoto says his original interest in Morris, which took him to England, included an interest in Morris's socialist activities. Although he researched these while in London, he did not write about them because of the strict control on such subjects (*Iroe-jiki*, p.72).
31. 'Moyô Zakkan (Miscellaneous Thoughts on Pattern)', *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, p.502.

> every time I yearned for an ability to create my own work. I felt I should destroy all my treasured old wares in order to gain even a small fraction of ability, which no one else could see. And so I destroyed them, in the hope that [the physical detachment from the reference to old wares] would push my impatient and troubled mind towards creativity.[32]

Creativity was the crucial issue for Tomimoto: it distinguished artists from artisans, and modern craft from the old conventions.

The advent of Tomimoto's new attitude towards ceramics was parallelled by an important development in the artistic climate: the Hyûzankai/Fyûzankai exhibition (1912-3), the first anti-academic art exhibition, which included prints and crafts among the exhibits (see Chapter One). In other words, craft was given a new stage to perform on, one which it shared with other arts. As Kumata Tsukasa comments:

> The spirit which accepted free expression was also indiscriminate in choosing material or techniques. One may say that a kind of aestheticism was being born: an aestheticism which held that beauty which stemmed from the originality, individuality and individual spirit of the producer was the most noble. This spiritual climate accepted the amateur-like works of Tomimoto and Leach.[33]

A little later there was another development in ceramics which also challenged the conventions of 'art craft'. From the late 1920s, there was a kind of feverish revival of old Momoyama wares, replacing the preference for the smooth and delicate Edo wares.[Figs.40-41] The interest

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32. 'Tôkô-to shite omou (My Thoughts as a Pottern)', 1920, *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, p.531.
33. *Rondon-no Seishun*, p.7.

in the free and asymmetrical Momoyama pottery, produced primarily for tea utensils during the Momoyama period (1582-1598), had arisen with the resurgence of the tea ceremony in the newly emerged, prosperous middle class. But the famous old kilns had either vanished or changed their products over the three hundred years, making it difficult for the modern potters to obtain the secrets of the original products. It was not until the late 1920s that eager potters such as Katô Tôkurô and Arakawa Toyozô discovered the locations of old kilns and excavated them to obtain original fragments. They studied the fragments closely and experimented in reproducing the characteristic effects, colours and textures of the old utensils, which were highly treasured by the practitioners of the tea ceremony.

Tomimoto often expressed his dislike of the tea ceremony. While recognising its contributions to the development of ceramics in the past, he believed it encouraged copying and repetition and so was largely responsible for the stagnation of contemporary ceramics:

> Nothing is more threatening for the ceramic artist than the risk of being trapped in a shell of old wares. [Copies of old wares] are easy to make and pleasant to the eyes of ignorant people. One can easily make a living and gain a quick success from producing copies of old wares.[34]

It was for this same reason that he eventually distanced himself from Yanagi's Mingei movement, which started

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34. 'Moyô-to Kôgei (Pattern and Craft)' 1927, *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, p.344.

around this time. In 1925 Tomimoto joined Yanagi and others in proposing the establishment of a folk art gallery. They shared an admiration for some *getemono* (ordinary wares), and believed that their aesthetic qualities should be properly recognised. But Tomimoto soon parted with Yanagi and his group when he saw the movement was heading towards encouraging craft producers to copy old wares, ignoring the distinction between the artist and the mere artisan.

Tomimoto was not ignorant of the traditions of Japanese art. On the contrary, he suffered because of his love for them. In fact, his knowledge and understanding of traditional Japanese art were such that he was one of the first to perceive the two streams of artistic tradition in Japan, as exemplified in the clay pots of the Yayoi and Ainu styles. This concept was developed in 1940 by Tanikawa Tetsuzô, who refined it into what is now known as the theory of the Jômon and Yayoi prototypes in 1944.[Figs.42-3] Tomimoto's article was written in 1934, and it may well have inspired Tanikawa.[35]

Tomimoto's problem was how to achieve the goal which, he felt, his age required: to create purely individual as well as aesthetic objects that would stand alongside the

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35. 'Katachi-to Iro (Form and Colour)', *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, pp.328-332. I have troubled Mr Yamamoto Shigeo, Tomimoto Kenkichi Memorial Museum, in determining the date of the article. Tanikawa associated himself with the Mingei group in the 1930s when Tomimoto still actively participated in the group's discussions.

old craft in beauty:

> During the ten years or more since I decided to make my own patterns, I have drawn thousands of pattern designs. Out of these thousands, I selected about two hundred for the last publication of my pattern book. Of the two hundred, one hundred were only indicators of the chronological development. From the remaining hundred, there are only twenty to thirty patterns that I use today. I have used these twenty to thirty for over ten years. However, if I compare them with one pattern from an old ware, I feel that all my works degrade into nothing while the old piece continues to shine.[36]

Some years later, he seems to have eased in his attitude. 'After seeing some Chinese people learn drawing and writing through copying the model, and eventually develop their own individual styles', he wrote in 1932, 'I came to realise the folly of single-mindedly pursuing an untrodden path.'[37] It was, however, this single-minded determination with which he approached his work and the way it reflected on his ceramics that made him one of the most significant craft artists in modern Japan.

Tomimoto's second problem was his commitment to mass production. He wrote in 1917:

> This year, I began to desire to make craft which can be used by anyone for everyday life, at the lowest price possible. This is a very important matter for me, and I think it will have an important role in the direction in which I will proceed... What has been called craft are toys, as it were, for a limited number of people. Those, of course, include my works.[38]

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36. 'Moyô-to Kôgei', *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, pp.342-3.
37. 'Tôji Kôgei-no Zuanhô (How to Design Patterns for Ceramics)', *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, p.555.
38. 'Kôbô Yori (From the Workshop)', *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, p.515.

In 1919 Tomimoto tried this first experiments in what was to lead to mass production of his designs in the name of producing affordable and beautiful ceramics for everyday use. But around 1925, he perceived the difficulties that faced him in this direction and realised that the time was 'not ripe'.[39] He moved to Tokyo with his family in 1926 to provide a better education for his children, but winter in Tokyo proved too cold for his work, freezing the clay. So he began to spend a few winter months every year in other pottery-producing regions to study different techniques. At the same time, he continued to experiment in mass production, using two methods: drawing patterns on plates thrown by the kiln workers and making a model for the kiln workshop to copy in large numbers. In 1932 he even devised rubber stamps for the purpose.

Early in 1930 his family went to Kyûshû for three months. He writes of the experience of visiting local kilns as a stranger, searching for a suitable workshop. At one kiln, he set himself at the corner of the factory where thousands of clay bases (*soji*) were produced each day. Tomimoto would select the bases and draw patterns with a brush dipped in *gosu* (blue glaze), on two to three hundred pieces a day. That year, he exhibited his cheap wares in Tokyo. Around 1932, he was confident that his efforts were producing some results. But the scheme never took off as large-scale production. Inui Yoshiaki points out

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39. 'Yôhen Zakki (Thoughts at the Kiln)', 1925, *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, p.288.

that it was firstly because the production was limited to Tomimoto's abilities to glaze a few hundred a day for limited days. Secondly, when his designs were copied, there were not many good workers who could skilfully copy the artist's design in large numbers.[40] Tomimoto himself wrote in 1947:

> About thirty years ago I made medium-size plates for use in the kitchen at ceramics-producing areas like Seto, and sold them at around fifty *sen* each. The next year, however, those plates were sold as a kind of antique ware, at forty or fifty yen each. I was saddened that things had gone in a completely different direction [from my intentions].[41]

It is not surprising that Tomimoto suffered from the dilemma of trying to produce genuinely original works while compromising in quality in order to produce cheap ceramics. What helped him work in the two areas simultaneously, perhaps, was his confidence in his abilities as an artist and his strong sense of duty to society.

Tomimoto thus strictly distinguished between the works of creative artists and those of artisans, i.e., skill-based craft. Although he admired the latter as it was, he drew

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40. *Tomimoto Kenkichii-ten*, Asahi Shinbunsha, 1986, p.175.
41. 'Zuan-ni Kansuru Kôgeika-no Jikaku-to Hansei'(The Awareness and Self-reflection of the Craft Artist on Pattern Design), *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, p.614.

an uncompromising line between them.[42] This was reflected in his opposition to the government assistance scheme of the Holders of Important Intangible Cultural Property, known as the Living National Treasure scheme. Tomimoto was against the scheme because it did not make a distinction between craft artists and artisans who were skilled but had little creativity. In addition, he believed that the government could assist in the continuation of traditional skills, but assisting artists would be meaningless because works of art belong to the individual artists.[43]

The new approach to craft embraced and advocated by Tomimoto had a strong influence on younger artists. Takamura Toyochika expressed similar views to Tomimoto's in his review of the *Nôten* (Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce Exhibition of Design and Applied Arts) published in *Bijutsu Shinpô* in 1917. Like Tomimoto, Toyochika was concerned about quality in mass-produced industrial craft, which the exhibition aimed to serve. He believed that only good decorative artists and their

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42. Tomimoto described one of the workshops he visited and worked in, with a kind of awe:
> Over twenty workers making the base at full speed, each of them capable of shaping four or five hundred a day on the potter's wheel, and the spectacular sight of the flood of bases pouring into the kiln with unbelievable smoothness and speed. Our ceramics are indeed a child's play ('Nagasaki Zakki (Thoughts in Nagasaki), 1930, *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, pp.418-19).

43. Despite his opposition and his rejection in the previous year, he reluctantly accepted the title of a Living National Treasure in 1955 for the enamel glazed porcelain.

efforts could bring about a genuine development in industrial design.[44]

3-3. Fujii Tatsukichi and his concept of craft

Fujii Tatsukichi (1881-1964) was a senior activist in the New Craft movement. He is now generally known as one who created the concept of *shugei* (home craft) for women in the home. As a designer, his unconventional and modern approach to craft inspired men such as Takamura Toyochika, Nishimura Toshihiko, Hamada Shôji and others. Toyochika wrote in his autobiography that '[Fujii] was a forerunner whom one must not forget when considering the modernisation of craft, and who turned his hand to any material and enlightened young artists like us with his unique approach to design'.[45]

Fujii never went to the Tokyo School of Fine Arts but was apprenticed to jewellers in Tokyo where he learned to make cloisonné.[46] In 1904 Fujii was sent to St Louis when his employer participated in an international exhibition there. He returned in the following year, after seeing the Eastern and Western art at the Boston Museum. On his return he left the jeweller and ventured into a cloisonné business which failed. He began working in craft art,

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44. Takamura Toyochika, *Bijutsu Shinpô*, November 1917, p.50; Tomimoto 'Kôbô yori', 1917, *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, p.523.
45. Takamura Toyochika, *Jigazô*, Chûôkôron Bijutsu Shuppan, Tokyo, 1968, p.116.
46. The following chronology is taken from Yamada Mitsuharu, *Fujii Tatsukichi-no Shôgai*, Fûbaisha, Tokyo, 1974.

experimenting with various materials, while becoming acquainted with young artists.

In 1911 he held an exhibition at Takamura Kôtarô's Rôkandô, and joined Gorakukai. He also exhibited an enbroidered work at Fûzankai in 1912. Fujii believed that craft, like any other form of art, should be creative and should express the individual artist's feelings. The nature of craft, he once explained, is best exemplified in the Tamamushi-no Zushi, a small seventh-century Imperial shrine in Hôryûji temple, originally decorated with paintings and coloured beetle wings. According to him, the shrine was a composite of architecture, painting and sculpture.[47] By referring to craft as a composite art in which the artist must control the material, shape, pattern design and production, Fujii adopted the same viewpoint as Tomimoto and Takamura Toyochika. Accordingly, he strongly rejected the prevailing practice of the established so-called master craftsmen, who only executed designs made by someone else.

Fujii was uncompromising in his stand, and he thus made enemies around 1920 when he argued for it during the lobbying for the inclusion of craft in Teiten. He made two proposals if craft were to be included in the government art exhibition: that the selectors should be chosen not from the established 'craftsmen' but from the

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47. *Bijutsu Kôgei-no Tehodoki* (Lessons on Art Craft), Hakubundô, Tokyo, 1930, pp.1-2.

painters and sculptors who, he believed, had a wider vision of art as a whole; and that works of craft should be displayed not in a separate section but among other works of art, i.e., two-dimensional works with paintings and three-dimensional works with sculpture.[48] It is interesting that this vision is very similar to the idea which impressed Tomimoto so much at the South Kensington Museum. At any rate, given the politics of the art-and-craft industry then, Fujii's claim was unrealistic and was perceived by many craft artists as an exercise in self-promoting. To these allegations, Fujii replied in front of the Education Minister and Masaki Naohiko, one of the major art administrators:

> They say that [my proposals are based on] personal ambition. But I have no such ambition. My object will be attained when craft is included [in Teiten]. Even when my object is attained, I myself will not submit any work.[49]

True to his words, Fujii never submitted his works to Teiten - though his sisters and niece did theirs.[50] The craft section in Teiten was established in 1927 as the Fourth Section (the First Section was *nihon-ga*, the Second *yôga* and the Third sculpture), and the selectors for the craft section consisted of five artists and six

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48. Yamada, pp.100-1.
49. Quoted in Yamada, p.101.
50. Fujii Tatsukichi never married and, while not travelling, lived with his sisters and niece who were also recognised craft artists.

established craft artists.[51] Fujii, in the meantime, was writing reviews of Teiten, attacking the quality of the submitted works, and particularly the fact that only the craft section in Teiten accepted works which were not produced by the artist.[52] In 1932, he left the Tokyo craft scene for a long journey around Japan in search of traditional local craft, holding exhibitions now and then, and assisting local organisations.[53]

3-4. Takamura Toyochika, from Mukei to Jitsuzai Kôgei

Takamura Toyochika was the third son of Takamura Kôun. When Toyochika failed the entrance examination for the Science course at the First High School (most students of which went on to the Imperial University) and was revaluating his future direction, Kôun suggested that Toyochika should become a craftsman in metal casting, for the practical reason that a craftsman could always live on making small decorative pieces while there was not enough

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51. They were: Okada Saburônosuke, Yûki Somei, Wada Eisaku, Kikuchi Keigetsu (painting) and Akatsuka Jitoku (maki-e), Itaya Hazan, Kiyomizu Rokubei (ceramics), Shimizu Nanzan, Katori Hozuma and Tsuda Shinobu (metalwork). Okada withdrew from the position as he did not believe in the combined selection committee (*Jigazô*, p.224). The combined selection committee continued until 1930 (*Dai Hakkai Teiten Shuppin Mokuroku* (Catalogue of the Eighth Teiten, p.246; Shibazaki Fûko (ed.), 'Kôgei Yonjûnen-no Omoide', Han Kôgeisha, Tokyo, 1963, p.10.)
52. He wrote in 1930: 'There is an intriguing fact, that is, presently Mr Tatsumura Heizô who himself claims to be a merchant, which is also public knowledge, and whose submissions are made by other people, is recommended for submission to the Fourth Section.' (*Bijutsu Kôgei-no Tehodoki*, Introduction, p.4.)
53. His later activities were concentrated largely in Nagoya.

demand for sculpture, which he and his eldest son Kôtarô had made their profession. Also, if Toyochika could cast bronze, he could work with his brother Kôtarô.[54] Toyochika made his final decision after consulting Kôtarô, who was in America at the time, because he 'considered everything [his brother] said or did a guide for [his own] directions'.[55]

Kôun introduced Toyochika to Tsuda Shinobu (1875-1946), the young and progressive assistant professor of metal casting at the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. Kôun had worked with Tsuda on some projects and had come to trust his abilities. After learning practical techniques of metal casting at Tsuda's workshop, he entered the School of Fine Arts in 1909. Toyochika began to question the teaching at the school, where the students were taught to make traditional objects that were alien to their immediate life, starting with classical stationery such as brush stands, vases for flower arrangement or incense burners. The next stage of the curriculum was decorative pieces for the *tokonoma* (alcove) - goldfish, carp and such.

> I had thought these items boring even before I entered the school. Although I did not think much of them, I still had to make them because they were assignments. Naturally, they did not arouse my enthusiasm. I wanted to make what I had in mind. For example, although I did not smoke at the time, I wanted to make an ashtray. But the school would not include such an item in assignments, therefore I would not earn any marks for it.[56]

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54. This eventually happened when Kôtarô was satisfied with Toyochika's casting.
55. Takamura Toyochika, *Jigazô*, p.68.
56. Takamura Toyochika, *Jigazô*, pp.93-4.

As the available references for metal casting designs were all pre-modern Japanese designs, Toyochika began to look for fresh inspiration in imported Western books and experimented with Greek and Egyptian designs. 'I was rather simple-minded then', he wrote, 'but strangely, I felt as if I had gained my own breathing-space.'[57]

The 1910s, when Toyochika graduated from the School of Fine Arts and began group activities, also saw the emergence of other craft artists. Fujii Tatsukichi recalls that the first appearance of the new craft was with the formation of the *Gorakukai* (Hobby Society), a group of artists from the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, in 1909. The group was described in *Bijutsu Shinpô* as:

> an institution in which artists with taste and brains exhibit works they executed. And its value rests in the fact that the works fully reveal the artist's taste and refinement because he/she makes them for his/her own enjoyment without having to consider the taste of foreigners or rich clients. They are also interesting. 'This is how pleasant works of art can be obtained.'[58]

The reporter (Sakai Yoshisaburô) holds that the quality of craft art does not come from technical expertise only, and that refinement of taste and dignity are more important.[59] He introduces as examples works by Okada Saburônosuke, an established oil painter, which were exhibited at the society.

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57. Takamura Toyochika, *Jigazô*, p.96.
58. *Bijutsu Shinpô*, vol. 10, no. 11, September 1911, p.348.
59. *Bijutsu Shinpô*, vol. 10, no. 11, September 1911, p.348.

From around 1913, the craft artists Tomimoto Kenkichi and Bernard Leach also began to attract attention. Takamura Toyochika recalls that he was 'strongly moved' when he saw a chair designed by Tomimoto which used ropes, instead of the conventional wood or leather, for the seat and the back.

> Although in today's terms [this was written in 1968], it was not anything special, nothing like that had been previously attempted. It made me realise that one could use anything one liked to make a piece of craft. There was no need to follow conventions. I was so strongly inspired that I felt as if the world had suddenly opened up in front of me. It was a kind of eye-opening experience.[60]

Toyochika's first activities after graduating from the School was to hold an exhibition of the creative designs of the graduates from various departments. Their efforts were encouraged by teachers of painting and theory such as Kuroda Seiki and Iwamura Tôru, though their seniors in the craft department hardly visited the exhibition.[61] [Fig.44] The experience of two exhibitions led them to form a group of craft artists around Toyochika and some like-minded friends. The group was called *Chûjinsha* (Column Figure), a name suggested by Kôtarô as a translation of caryatid. 'The female standing figure is pure sculpture, a fine art,

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60. Takamura Toyochika, *Jigazô*, p.125. Toyochika remembered the occasion as Tomimoto's exhibition on his return from Britain, but the occasion seems to be the Exhibition of Minor Works by New Artists, organised by *Bijutsu Shinpô* and held at Goraku in 1911, ten months after Tomimoto's return. Tomimoto decorated the exhibition space, designed the chairs and exhibited a painting (*London-no Seishun*, 1990, p.119).
61. Takamura Toyochika, *Jigazô*, pp.151-59.

while at the same time it is functional. Likewise, craft has both useful and artistic aspects.'[62]

The activities of Chûjinsha were expanded in 1919 to join the then most prominent leaders of the New Craft Movement and form the *Sôshoku Bijutsuka Kyôkai* (Decorative Artists' Society). Its ten members were Okada Saburônosuke, Nagahara Kôtarô, Watanabe Soshû, Nishimura Toshihiko, Hara Saburô, Fujii Tatsukichi, Kon Wajirô, Saitô Kazô, Hirokawa Matsugorô and Takamura Toyochika. The first clause of its rules read: 'The purpose of this society is to raise the dignity of the so-called craft art objects and indicate their ultimate nature, by creating and exhibiting works of art'.[63] This was one of the first occasions, if not the first, when a position regarding craft objects as works of art was clearly stated. Thus the Society's exhibition became a landmark in the move towards a wider recognition of craft as a form of art.

Takamura Toyochika, Sugita Kadô, Yamamoto Azumi, Sasaki Shôdô and Kitahara Senroku gathered around Tsuda Shinobu, who had just returned from France, and formed a study group in 1925. The group was reorganised as the Mukei Society in the following year, launching a formal challenge to the old values and practices in craft. Its manifesto was printed in the first issue of its newsletter, published in February 1926:

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62. Takamura Toyochika, *Jigazô*, p.158.
63. Takamura Toyochika, *Jigazô*, pp.165-66.

> The Birth of Mukei
> Mukei is no-form, the formless. We do not have a style. Every one of us is free, and has a style of his own. Would anything do, then? No. There must be an invisible thread linking us through our individual styles. A burning passion, a raw and earnest enthusiasm, a cow-like patience and a yearning for the beautiful future - these must be present among us.
> Retrospective mind, hesitation, shrinking, repose, death, emptiness, silence, maintaining the present and prudence.
> They are what we despise most.
> Freshness, vividness, the future and a cheer.
> We brandish our flag towards the distant light.
> Now is now, the moment that will fly away. Love this moment. Create the craft art that breathes in this moment, and defend it. Those who long for the past when courtiers walked about praising the cherry blossom, Die Out![64]

The year 1926 was a busy year for Takamura Toyochika. Apart from the forming of Mukei, the *Nihon Kôgei Bijutsukai* (Japan Craft Art Society) was formed and held an exhibition concurrently with Teiten, as part of the lobbying for the inclusion of craft in Teiten. The members of the Mukei were active in the preparation of this exhibition, which represented the old and the new currents of the contemporary craft world. Also in 1926, a craft magazine *Kôgei Jidai* (Craft Age) was published and Toyochika became involved in the publication. According to Toyochika, the magazine was planned by Yamamoto Kanae, who had been working for the Farmers' Art Movement, and his brother-in-law Kitahara Yoshio, the publisher of the art magazine *Atelier*. The first issue of the *Craft Age* was published in November 1926. Takamura Toyochika's foreword deserves attention. He begins the passage with the following:

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64. Shibazaki (ed.), 'Kôgei Yonjûnen-no Omoide', p.7.

> Pure craft - that is, craft art - has its purpose in appreciation, in the same way as painting and sculpture. Its form assumes utility, but utility is not its primary purpose... Industrial craft shares the form with pure craft, but its primary purpose is not appreciation... it does not sacrifice utility for the sake of appreciative purpose... The former belongs to the realm of art, and the latter to industry.[65]

His objection was that pure craft was excluded from Teiten, while Shôkôten (the Department of Commerce and Industry Exhibition) included both pure and industrial craft which, in his view, should be kept apart and encouraged to develop separately.

The *Craft Age* lasted only a year, having published eleven issues. In the meantime, the Mukei began to issue a bulletin which lasted until the group dissolved in 1931. The group also held an exhibition in March 1927, ahead of the first Teiten to include a craft section in autumn. It was held at Mitsukoshi department store for good publicity.[66] Toyochika records that the exhibition, the first major New Craft group exhibition, was a great success, and they received many letters from craft artists around Japan. The group exhibition was held yearly. Apart from the exhibitions, the Mukei group attracted attention when the works of many of the members were accepted at the first craft section of Teiten. Toyochika submitted two pieces, both were accepted, and one was

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65. Takamura Toyochika, *Jigazô*, pp.210-11.
66. The role of the department store in exhibiting new, local and colonial art and craft is an interesting subject, although it is outside the scope of this thesis. Mr Yamazaki Tsuyoshi, a curator of the Osaka City Museum, has been working on the subject.

awarded the first prize. Sugita Kadô, Kitahara Senroku and Sasaki Shôdô also submitted two pieces each and all were accepted, Sasaki and Kitahara also winning the first prize alongside Toyochika.[67] Another significant activity of the group was a lecture trip by seven of its members to the north-west craft-producing regions. Toyochika records that after seeing the poor state of some local craft production, they compiled a long report identifying problems and suggesting changes. The report was much appreciated.[68]

As seen in relation to Fujii Tatsukichi, the inclusion of craft in Teiten was far from the solution to the problems of craft. In addition to the obvious problem of personal relationships, particularly favouritism in the teacher-student relationship between the selectors and those who submitted works, the participants tended to make pieces that would catch the viewers' (and so the selectors') attention by their size, shape and colour. In addition, the so-called 'classicists', who valued technical perfection more highly than creativity and who preferred conservative designs to innovative ones, began to dominate

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67. *Nitten-shi*, vol.8, Nitten-shi Hensan Iinkai, 1982, pp.244-47.
68. Takamura Toyochika, *Jigazô*, p.248.

the selection committee.[69] Takamura Toyochika and some of the ex-Mukei members began preparations for another move, which resulted in the formation of the *Jitsuzai Kôgei Bijutsukai* (Actuality Craft Art Association) in 1935. Their founding statement reflects the difference in their circumstances compared to those of Mukei:

> Japanese craft art today has hit a slump, that is, expression for the sake of expression and decoration for the sake of decoration. The slump is a necessary stage in the development of craft, but it is stuck in the situation. The situation is likened to the time when photography aimed to be 'as beautiful as a painting', so that its real nature was distorted. the same is happening to craft now. We attempt to recover craft from this state and restore its natural life to it. Whether it is to be mass-produced or to be made as one piece only, a craftwork must not have its utility purpose subordinate to beauty nor have its utility purpose merely coexist with beauty. Only when utility equals beauty as a unified whole can the truth of craft be found. This applies equally to craft art and industrial craft. Our road makes a fresh start where the search for this truth begins.[70]

To be true to the above claim, the Actuality Craft exhibition (1936) opened its doors to accept a wider variety of submissions, from toys to furniture, book design and posters, than had ever been seen before. The stated goal of the second exhibition emphasised two important criteria for the admission and selection of

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69. The progressive section of the craft world was infuriated by the fact that while Itaya Hazan and Katori Hozuma, the conservative section of the craft, were first admitted to the membership of the Imperial Art Academy in 1929 and others followed, Tsuda Shinobu was excluded from the selection committee for three years, and not admitted to Academy membership until 1935, despite the fact that Tsuda lobbied most earnestly for the inclusion of craft in Teiten (*Jigazô*, pp.274-75; also Shibazaki (ed.), 'Kôgei Yonjûnen-no Omoide', p.10).
70. Takamura Toyochika, *Jigazô*, p.278.

works: that the motivation for their production was based on present-day life, and that their structure was rational so that their functions could be fully realised.

On these principles, the Actuality Craft exhibition adopted many innovative display styles. First, in contrast to the usual practice of the time, the exhibits were not displayed in glass cases. Second, objects were placed in appropriate settings: plinths of different heights and sizes were prepared for the purpose; flowers were arranged for each vase; and carpets were spread on the floor rather than hung on the wall. Third, model rooms with furniture settings were prepared by the members and participating department stores. And fourth, public craft institutions were invited to display their industrial craft.

The innovative display at the exhibition was widely welcomed. In his review of the second Actuality Craft exhibition in *Atelier*, Yokokawa Kiichirô summed up the significance of the new approach to craft. Yokokawa identified the prevailing problem of craft at Teiten as a drift away from the utilitarian nature of craft and a tendency to become an exhibition art, while Actuality Craft, 'through their programme and practice... [and] with their modern intelligence, regained utility, which is the

legitimate nature of craft.'[71] Yokokawa saw that while the group's principle 'utility equals beauty' was nothing new, it appeared new because Japanese craft in general was detached from the nature and principle of craft. He thus hailed the group's display as an effort to solve the dilemma of the conventional display, which treated craft only as visually appealing objects.[72]

3-5. The Imperial Craft Society

In 1927, the *Teikoku Kôgei Kai* (Imperial Craft Society) was formed. It aimed at promoting craft from the viewpoint of the national economy at a time of economic depression. The promoters of the Imperial Craft Society were prominent figures in government, industry and art administration, including Baron Morimoto, Marquis Tokugawa, Hara Tomitarô (silk trader and industrial leader), Masaki Naohiko (Head of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts) and prominent practitioners Takamura Kôun, Miyagawa Kôzan and so on. Its founding statement reveals their concern about the stagnation of the quality of Japanese craft, particularly in comparison with the European craft industry.

> Today's pressing needs are: industrialisation of craft from the viewpoint of the national economy; modernisation of craft from the viewpoint of people's everyday needs; and democratisation of craft from the viewpoint of social policy-making. Only the craft

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71. Yokokawa, 'Gendai Kôgei Bunka-no Dankai-to Jitsuzai Kôgeiten-no Genjitsuteki Yakuwari' reprinted in Takamura Toyochika (ed.), 'Report of the Second Actuality Craft Exhibition', 1937, p.16.
72. Yokokawa, p.19.

> that meets those three requirements is the craft for today.[73]

While the functions and activities of the Imperial Craft Society concerning industrial design and mass-produced crafts are outside the scope of this study, its concept of crafts is important here. It was advocated by Yasuda Rokuzô, a professor at the Tokyo High School of Craft (*Tokyo Kôtô Kôgei Gakkô*). In his lecture entitled 'What is Craft?' for the Imperial Craft Society late in 1926 (published in February 1927), Yasuda presented a rational view of the subject. In the printed report, he firstly points out that definitions of craft at any period can not be universal but must necessarily reflect the conditions and needs of the period. It is fine, he says, if some want to treat craft as fine art, or as industry or even antiques, as long as they respect other viewpoints.

> A complete interpretation of craft must encompass the whole of craft as well as defining the specifics. Furthermore, everything in the world changes with age, and so the definition of craft today is different from that of ten years ago. The interpretation of craft, therefore, must take into account where things are going in our present age, and it must be rational and practical, as well as favourable to its progress and development.[74]

Yasuda pointed out that the industry, which consisted of *kagaku kôgyô* (scientific industry) and *bijutsu kôgyô* (art industry), had placed too much emphasis on the former, causing the neglect of the latter in the process of production and consequent poor artistic quality in

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73. 'Teikoku Kôgeikai Sôritsu Shuisho', in *Teikoku Kôgeikai Pamphlet* no.1, Tokyo, 1926, p.2.
74. *Teikoku Kôgeikai Pamphlet* no.2, 1927, pp.23-4.

industrial products. His proposal was to divide human products into three categories: *kôgyô* (industry), *kôgei* (craft) and *bijutsu* (art), regardless of artistic quality. Industry was to consist of machinery, power and industrial materials while craft would consist of any product, machine-made or hand-crafted, for everyday use, which also met the taste of the age.

'Any everyday product', Yasuda says, 'which the consumer determines to buy or not according to the personal judgement on its aesthetic quality, can be classified as craft.'[75] According to this definition ceramics, for instance, can be either industrial or craft products, depending on the nature of the object. Art, in Yasuda's definition, consists of painting, sculpture and architecture, all of which overlap with craft, again depending on the nature of the product.

By excluding the question of aesthetics from the definition of art and craft, Yasuda offered a rational view for the members of the Imperial Craft Society whose main aim was to address the issues of craft for the national interest - to develop quality industrial craft for export.

3-6. The *me-kiki* tradition

Yanagi Sôetsu was often called a *me-kiki* (one with a discerning eye) for his abilities to discriminate artistic

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75. *Teikoku Kôgeikai Pamphlet* no.2, 1927, p.28.

qualities. Tanikawa Tetsuzô likened him to Sen-no Rikyû, the much-revered sixteenth-century tea master. Yanagi himself rebuffed this comparison, claiming that he was a superior *me-kiki* to Rikyû.[76] Others dismissed such comments, claiming that Yanagi's judgement was biased and that his collection did not warrant such a reputation.[77] In order to evaluate the validity of the claims in these arguments, one needs to set the perspective by examining the tradition.

According to Katô Tôkurô's *Genshoku Tôki Daijiten* (Large Dictionary of Ceramics in Original Colours), the word *me-kiki* in the tea ceremony has two meanings: one refers to judging the value of tea utensils, and the other to discovering values in objects that were previously unrecognised. The word can also be used for people who are engaged in either activity. In the formative years of the tea ceremony, when the concept of *wabi-cha* was created, the latter meaning of *me-kiki* was regarded as an essential quality for a good tea practitioner. To hold a tea ceremony, the host was required not only to prepare the tea and decorate the surroundings with utmost care, but also to serve food creatively in accordance with the season and the occasion, and to suit the individual guests. Only those who had the ability to select and use the decoration to show originality in creating a

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76. Yanagi, 'Rikyû-to Watashi (Rikyû and I)', *Zenshû*, vol.17, p.114.
77. For example, see Shirasaki Hideo, *Kitaôji Rosanjin* vol.2, pp.282-3.

harmonious atmosphere were respected as *me-kiki*. But as the practice of the tea ceremony spread more widely during the Edo period, it became stylised and some utensils became highly-priced commodities in later generations. This caused a shift of emphasis in *me-kiki* from discerning values to valuation of utensils by rules and categories.[78] Both kinds of practice have had an immense influence in the historical development of some crafts, particularly ceramics and bambooware. It is *me-kiki* in the sense of discerning aesthetic values that is relevant here.

The tradition of *me-kiki* is not normally given a place in art history discourse in Japan. When it does find a place, it is usually limited to a historical discussion of the 'spiritual' (Zen) aspect of its influence on art. During the modern period under discussion, however, one finds that its influence over art and craft went further than philosophical inspiration. The author believes it is particularly important when discussing Mingei because it helps to relate Yanagi's theory to a wider aesthetic tradition, but studies on Mingei have so far failed to address the issue.[79] However, a detailed discussion of the nature and practice of the tea ceremony is not relevant here, and the reader can refer to various

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78. Tankôsha, Tokyo, 1972, p.940.
79. Idekawa Naoki touches on the issue in relation to Kitaôji Rosanjin's criticism of Yanagi, and suggests that Yanagi lacked expertise in the quality 'aristocratic' craft (*Mingei: Riron-no Hôkai-to Yôshiki-no Tanjô*, p.33).

publications on the subject.[80] This section will survey the tradition of *me-kiki* around the period under discussion, and its relevance to Yanagi's theory will be discussed in Chapter Five.

As Japan's prosperity grew early in the twentieth century, the tea ceremony grew in popularity as an accomplishment for wealthy men of taste and for young women.[81] On the other hand, the tea ceremony was often criticised for having degenerated into superficial and rigid forms, which in turn caused the utensils to degrade in general quality and to increase absurdly in price (a criticism which has continued to the present day in the 1990s). Such criticisms were most likely valid, but there were still a small number of highly respected connoisseurs who were usually art collectors (because even a modest *chajin* needs a range of objects to decorate his tea room for different occasions) whom the ordinary 'man of tea' would seek to emulate. These connoisseurs can be classified as both practitioners of art and art critics. It would require a

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80. Many books have been published on the history and practice of the tea ceremony as well as criticisms in English: Okakura Kakuzô, *The Book of Tea*, Dover, New York, 1964 (originally published by Fox, Duffield and Company in 1906) and Suzuki Daisetsu, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1959) are only two of the major publications. A short but adept discussion, through personal experiences, is Tanikawa's essay 'Michi-to shite-no Cha to Geijutsu-to shite-no Cha'(**year-NLA**), *Geijutsu-ni okeru Tôyô-to Seiyô*, Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 1990, pp.159-178.
81. *Taiyô*, the popular magazine for intellectuals, published from 1895 to 1928, carried regular articles on the subject both in 'arts' and 'family' sections, beginning with its first issue.

separate study to establish the ways in which a number of them exercised influence over the art world.[82] In this thesis, therefore, the treatment of this subject will be limited to clearly documented cases and to some relevant points.

Generally, ample exposure to good quality objects, in addition to personal interest, is necessary for connoisseurship to develop in an individual. It is, for example, cultivated by the family environment: the father or his close friend or relative may be a collector of antiques or so-called *chajin* (an established tea practitioner), or the family business may be related to antiques or art objects. When the individual lacks such an environment, it needs to be created. The case of Kitaôji Rosanjin (1883-1959), who spent his youth in hardship and studied calligraphy as a young man, falls into this category.[83] According to Shirasaki Hideo, Kitaôji's biographer, Kitaôji diligently visited auctions, particularly in the 1910s and 20s when a large number of precious objects from the declined samurai clans and Edo

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82. For example, Christine M.E. Guth's *Art, Tea, and Industry* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1993) shows how the practice of tea ceremony was closely connected to and enhanced the collecting of art by Masuda Takashi, one of the most wealthy and powerful industrialists during the first decades of this century.
83. See Appendix 2 for Kitaôji Rosanjin.

merchants were auctioned.[84] It was the custom in those days that the items to be auctioned could be observed prior to the auction day. As the items were rare and expensive, it was natural that only privileged individuals could afford to possess them. They were often wealthy businessmen or industrialists, though not all of them were respected as *me-kiki*.

During the early decades of the twentieth century, three men were particularly prominent in tea ceremony circles: Masuda Takashi (*gô*: Donnô), the founder of Mitsui Bussan; Hara Tomitarô (*gô*: Sankei), a silk trader/producer and an industry leader; Matsunaga Yasuzaemon (*gô*: Jian), a giant in the electric power industry.[85] Masuda hosted a regular tea ceremony called Daishikai. Shirasaki claims that Masuda was first to acquire an old village house and move it to his property. This started a new trend, a taste for farmhouses among the connoisseurs in the late Taishô to early Shôwa eras.[86] When discussing the creation and reception of Mikuni-sô, the 'farm style' house which Yanagi and his group designed and decorated for an exhibition in 1928, the existence of this trend needs to be taken into account.

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84. Takahashi Yoshio (*gô* Hôan), a collector and *cha-jin*, recorded many of these auctions, as well as comments on important objects and their collectors in *Kinsei Dôgu Idô-shi*, Ariake Shobô, 1990 (originally published in 1929). Also see Shirasaki, *Kitaôji Rosanjin* I, Shinchôsha, Tokyo, 1985, pp.20-21; Segi Shin'ichi, *Shakai-no Naka-no Bijutsu*, Tokyo Shoseki, Tokyo, 1978, pp.110-117.
85. A *gô* is a name an individual uses in artistic or literary activities.
86. Shirasaki, vol,1, p.196.

Although Masuda seems to have dominated the world of *chajin*, Hara Tomitarô (1869-1939) had a significant influence in the wider art world: he designed and built his mansion Sankeisô in Yokohama, partially opened it to the public as soon as its main scheme was completed. He also generously patronised the group of *nihon-ga* artists led by Okakura Tenshin, supporting many of the major painters of the period such as Yokoyama Taikan, Maeda Seison, Kobayashi Kokei, Hayami Gyoshû, Shimomura Kanzan and others. That he bought works by Kobayashi Kokei and Hayami Gyoshû, which had failed to gain entry to the Bunten but later came to be highly valued, shows his independent judgement in the quality of art.

Apart from financially supporting some of them, Hara organised a study group with these artists, provided them with access to his rich collection of works by old masters so that they could learn from the best of the Japanese classical tradition. His influence can also be seen in some prominent young philosophers, Watsuji Tetsurô and Tanikawa Tetsuzô in particular. Watsuji, the author of *Fûdo*, the topological theory of cultures, wrote an extremely popular book, *Koji Junrei* (Pilgrimage to Old Temples), first published in 1919. It inspired many young intellectuals and turned their eyes to the appreciation of traditional Japanese art. The copy of the Ajanta mural which is mentioned at the beginning of the book was painted with the fund provided by Hara and was shown to

Watsuji by Tomitarô's son Zen'ichirô.[87]

Tanikawa Tetsuzô, who was to establish the famous theory of the Jômon and Yayoi traditions in Japanese art, was one of those who likened Yanagi's abilities as *me-kiki* to those of Sen-no Rikyû as mentioned earlier. Tanikawa was initially influenced by Yanagi's *mingei* theory, but eventually grew apart from him because he 'began to appreciate what Yanagi dismissed'.[88] The kind of ceramics which Yanagi 'dismissed' were those which he called 'aristocratic'. Tanikawa began to appreciate them after he was introduced to the tea ceremony through Hara Sankei and Matsunaga Jian. He points out that he saw some Momoyama teacups, which Yanagi dismissed as 'too individualistic and pretentious', come alive and harmonise with the atmosphere when used in the appropriate context.[89]

Two points need to be made before ending this section. One is that not all *me-kiki* agreed on the value of objects. The reason that the value judgement of men such as Masuda was respected was because they were well acquainted with the best examples of classical Japanese art first-hand (these objects seemed to have moved among them), and were able to judge the aesthetic, historical or

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87. Takeda Michitarô, *Hara Sankei: Kindai nihon-ga o sodateta gôshô*, Yûrindô, Tokyo, 1991, pp.82-3.
88. Tanikawa Tetsuzô, *Jômon-shiki Genkei-to Yayoi-shiki Genkei*, Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 1969.
89. Tanikawa Tetsuzô, *Jômon-shiki Genkei-to Yayoi-shiki Genkei*, pp.117-8.

practical value of a piece. They would hang a scroll which would be worth a National Treasure status in their tea room and serve tea in a rare piece of Momoyama pottery, for instance. While their personal taste varied, they were able to make judgements with a certain objectivity. As such an ability is based on individual perception and experience, it is necessarily elusive. It is interesting, therefore, to note that 'private' *me-kiki* such as Hara Sankei and Masuda Donnô kept a certain distance from government officials or institutions. Takeda writes:

> [Hara Tomitarô] was strongly confident of his own scholarship - scholarship on the history of Japanese art. Whatever others might criticise, he knew that his confidence was fully justified by the fact that he had built his enormous collection as a private individual, solely with his own judgement and with his own means. Those so-called scholars who are stuffed with knowledge would fall far behind him in the experience of physically touching the objects and of seeing the objects with their own eyes.[90]

Some *me-kiki* were fond of particular genres and collected according to their taste. Among the list of auctioned items belonging to the family of Naiki Kiyobei, a collector of Buddhist art, Shirasaki found none of so-called *mingei* items.[91] On the other hand, Takeda finds in the long list of Hara Sankei's collection (most of which is now in the Tokyo National Museum and the Yamato Bunkakan, Osaka) a number of tea utensils of humble origin.[92]

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90. Takeda Michitarô *Hara Sankei*, p.103.
91. *Kitaôji Rosanjin* I, p.205.
92. *Hara Sankei*, p.94.

The second point is that while men like Masuda Donnô had a strong influence, they kept their aesthetic thoughts to their circle, and did not attempt to rationalise them (although they often exchanged views on art in the form of poetry among their circle). In the meantime, younger literary men of the *Shirakaba* generation, who were keen to express their feelings and emotions over art, emerged (see Chapter One). They also wrote on craft objects, particularly on ceramics, and they were also called *me-kiki*. Aoyama Jirô (1901-79) was one such man and was treated by many young intellectuals around him as a kind of guru; his circle was nicknamed the 'Aoyama School'. Born in a rich family, he had no need to earn a living. His close friends included Nakahara Chûya (a poet), Kobayashi Hideo (a philosopher/critic), and a woman writer Uno Chiyo. Aoyama introduced many of his friends to ceramics. He was also an eloquent writer. When Yanagi first started the Mingei movement with a proposal to found a folk craft museum, Aoyama was one of those who joined Yanagi in the cause. He became critical of Yanagi's approach to the movement, however, and eventually parted with him.

As Shirasaki points out, it may be assumed at this stage that the men such as Aoyama Jirô and his group, including Yanagi Sôetsu, who came to be called *me-kiki* in a popular sense, did not quite possess the wider expertise which was essential to make objective judgements, due to their lack

of exposure to the rich variety of objects. In fact, both Aoyama and Yanagi were contemptuous of the contemporary practice of the tea ceremony. Unlike Tanikawa Tetsuzô or Watsuji Tetsurô, both members of Yanagi's generation, they had not participated in tea ceremonies of exclusive quality as practised by Masuda Donnô or Hara Sankei.

3-7. Theories of modern craft

The Actuality Craft Art Association's famous aphorism 'utility equals beauty' seems a far cry from the Mukei's 'beauty above utility' claim made ten years earlier. It must be noted, however, that the environment for craft had changed in the ten years. 'When Mukei was formed', Toyochika writes,

> the craft scene was in a helpless state of confusion, and pioneering work was necessary. To do that, we started by making something new to show the way for others who agreed with us to follow. In other words, it was a kind of genesis. Actuality Craft, however, was an attempt to reconstruct what was there. Thus a new clash began.[93]

Interestingly, the stated aim of the Second Actuality Craft Exhibition also noted that their claim 'utility equals beauty' had been taken in a narrow sense to mean that the exhibition was a collection of *getemono*. This suggests that by this time (1937) a claim on the utility of craft was not readily connected to modern craft, but to

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93. *Jigazô*, p.273. In the private sector, the National Painting Society (*Kokugakai*) established a craft section in 1928, after tentatively displaying Tomimoto's ceramics in the painting section the previous year.

Yanagi's ideas of *getemono*, first published in 1926. In order to clear up any such misunderstanding, the statement emphasises that Actuality Craft 'does not discriminate *jôtemono* (quality objects) from *getemono*, or folk craft from local craft, but seeks the right craft values among all that exist with purpose.'[94]

The three major craft artists discussed earlier appear to have had slightly different notions of craft and its utility. Tomimoto claimed that utility was the primary purpose of craft. It would not be wrong to say that it was this conviction that drove him to slave away in the local workshop in order to produce cheap everyday craft. Fujii Tatsukichi was reported to have said that he shared Yamamoto Kanae's idea of craft, which was: 'I made an object for my own use. I found it very good, so I offer it to others to use.'[95] These few words well illustrate the starting-point of Tatsukichi's whole attitude towards craft; he viewed craft as having both a personal and a universal nature. Takamura Toyochika's emphasis shifted from 'beauty above utility' to 'utility equals beauty' in the ten years between Mukei and Actuality Craft, in step with the change of environment.

If the craft artists and critics of the New Craft Movement shared the belief in the creativity of craft, then did they also share a common attitude towards utility in

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94. Takamura Toyochika (ed.), 'Report of the Second Actuality Craft Exhibition', p.2.
95. Yamada Mitsuharu, pp.117-8.

craft? The question is, perhaps, not appropriate. Kashiwagi Hiroshi rightly points out that, whenever the word 'utility' in craft has been mentioned, no question has been asked as to the content and context of utility itself, that is, who uses it and for what purpose.[96]

Yokokawa Kiichirô offers an answer to the question in his critical evaluation of the Actuality Craft exhibition. Having established that 'utility equals beauty' was a universal princile of craft, to which the works shown at the Actuality Craft exhibition attempted to return (as shown above), he holds that a piece of craft is used when it becomes a part of a specific lifestyle.[97] From this viewpoint, Yokokawa writes:

> The progressive character of the Actuality Craft exhibition as a whole takes a direction away from serving the cultural remnant of feudalism towards sympathy for the life of a progressive and cultured social group... The various pieces of craft made by [the Actuality Craft artists], therefore, are closely connected to the life-style of such a cultured social group... These facts reveal that [Actuality Craft] was born among the specific cultured group and, sharing a fairly unified ideology, places itself to serve that cultural group.[98]

Yokokawa's abundant use of the term 'cultured social group' reflects the fashion of the time, meaning the newly emerged middle class. Hida Toyojirô also quotes Takamura Toyochika's claim that his craft was made for use in the home of the 'young bourgeois'.[99] Yokokawa describes the

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96. *Kindai Nihon-no Sangyô Dezain Shisô*, Shôbunsha, Tokyo, 1990, pp.120ff.
97. Yokokawa, pp.18-9.
98. Yokokawa, pp.19-20.
99. *Modernism and Craftsmen*, exhibition catalogue, National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, 1983, pp.11-12.

metal vases of Takamura Toyochika and Toyoda Katsuaki as representatives of a new style. In the new style, according to Yokokawa, the decorative patterns, a combination of simple lines, do not stand apart from the shape but are organically integrated to it and bring out a unified effect when the flowers are arranged in the vase.[100] In other words, when Actuality Craft Art Association came up with the aphorism 'utility equals beauty', it in fact meant that they aimed at producing practical and decorative objects to enhance the middle-class lifestyle.[Figs.45-46]

The developments in craft during the period between 1910 and 1930 created an environment in which the producers and critics found themselves sharing some concepts and problems of craft with the Western world: the definition of craft as against fine arts, the question of utility and the development of industrial craft as well as the emergence of craft artists. From this enriched environment, various craft theories arose from different viewpoints.

An attempt to conceptualise craft as an entity independent from other objects was made by Okuda Seiichi, a lecturer at the Tokyo University and a critic of ceramics. In the introduction to his narrative of the history of Japanese craft (1931), Okuda distinguished *kôgei* (craft) from *bijutsu* (art), *kottô* (antiques) and *kôgyô* (mechanical

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100. Yokokawa, pp.20-21.

industry), and defined it as 'an art that conforms to human life'.[101] Okuda's definition, which is somewhat similar to Collingwood's, is a combination of the Western concept and Okakura's notion of the artistic tradition of the East, and leaves out many problems of practical application, as he tries to draw a clear-cut definition for each category of art, antiques, mechanical industry and craft, based on degrees of usefulness and aesthetic value. The defects of his theory are not immediately apparent, however, as the content of the book is limited to pre-modern Japanese craft. In comparison, Yasuda Rokuzô's definition (see above) was a more logical solution to the problems arising from Okuda's definitions.

An emphasis on expression in craft was embraced by *Sekidosha* (the Red Clay Company), a group formed in 1920 by young Kyoto potters who had been inspired by the romantic sensitivities of *Shirakaba*. Its founding announcement was:

> If we were to aspire to, or to praise those ceramicists who are yet to be awakened to self-awareness and are unable to discard conventional patterns, our life would be too miserable. Thus we hereby announce the birth of Sekidosha, out of our undeniable desire to seek the mystic light, search the depth of the beauty of nature with our own love, and attempt to express eternal beauty with unperishable art of ceramics.[102]

One of the principal potters of Sekidosha was Kusube

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101. *Nihon Kôgei-shi Gaisetsu*, Yûzankaku, Tokyo, 1931, p.13.
102. *Kusube Yaichi-to Shûhen-no Sakka ten*, exhibition catalogue, National Museum of Modern Art, Kyoto, 1989, p.135: also see *Gendai-no Tôgei*, vol.5, Kôdansha, Tokyo, 1975, p.136.

Yaichi (1897-1984). Kusube's father was engaged in pottery production, and he sent his son to the Kyoto Ceramics Testing Institute where Kusube met Hamada and Kawai. Strongly influenced by *Shirakaba*, Kusube aimed to create individual pottery rather than work in his father's factory. One early, monumental vase of his [Fig.47] was titled 'Lakeside at Dusk'. Such a poetic, if sentimental, title was very unusual. His works around this time were simple and strong. As Fukunaga Shigeki points out, they share the characteristics of the work of the early Mingei potters: Hamada, Kawai and Tomimoto. Incidentally, Kusube was a close friend of Kuroda Tatsuaki, the younger craft artist of the early Mingei movement, and shared respect and admiration for the work of Kawai Kanjirô. Kusube eventually became acquainted with Yanagi Sôetsu, and strongly sympathised with Yanagi's admiration of folk crafts. Unlike Kuroda, however, Kusube could not share Yanagi's views on the future of craft: Yanagi believed that craft artists should try to eliminate self in their work in order to create beautiful objects which were compatible to the old folk crafts. Kusube thus left Yanagi's circle and went on to follow his own instincts [Fig.48].

By this time, Western theories of craft had been widely introduced to intellectual circles, often through first-hand knowledge. Ueno Isaburô (1892-1951), for example, spent some years in Austria where he joined the Vienna

Vienna Workshop, and wrote about it.[103] The theories of Ruskin and Morris, particularly Ruskin's, had been known for some decades.[104] In addition to Tomimoto's introduction of Morris in 1912, Ôtsuki Kenji wrote late in the 1920s on the use of colour in Morris's pattern designs, while Mikimoto Ryûzô, who later established the Ruskin Library, introduced Ruskin's views on craft.[105]

Yamamoto Kanae, the pioneer of the Creative Print Movement, went to Paris in 1912 to study art. He left Paris in 1915 and travelled around Europe and Britain, and then to Moscow where he saw many works by farmers. The Western approach to art and craft, in education and practice, impressed him greatly. On his return to Japan late in 1915, Yamamoto founded the *Jidô Jiyûga Kyôiku Undô* (Children's Free Drawing Education Movement).[106] Before Yamamoto began the campaign, drawing education at school had meant that the children were given a model drawing which they had to copy, and their ability was assessed by the closeness of their work to the model drawing.

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103. *Kôgei Bijutsu-o Kataru*, Atelier Publishers, 1930, pp.56-65. The book is an anthology of articles on craft originally published in the magazines *Craft Age* and *Atelier* between 1927 and 1930.
104. See Appendix 1.
105. Ôtsuki, 'Uiriamu Morisu-no Zuan Saishoku-ron (An essay on William Morris's Colour Design)', *Kôgei Bijutsu-o Kataru*, pp.89-99. Mikimoto, 'Rasukin-no Kôgei Bijutsu-kan (Ruskin's Views on Craft Art)', *Kôgei Bijutsu-o Kataru*, pp.80-88.
106. For Yamamoto's life and activities, see Kosaki Gunji and Isogai Shizuo, *Yamamoto Kanae-to Kurata Hakuyô: Shôgai-to Geijutsu*, Ueda Shôken Shiryô Kankôkai, 1967. For the Free Drawing and Farmers' Art movements, see also Nakamura Giichi, *Zoku Nihon Kindai Bijutsu Ronsô-shi*, Kyûryûdô, Tokyo, 1982, pp.137-163.

Yamamoto claimed that it was wrong for adults to impose their concept of what children's drawing should be, and that teachers should attempt to foster children's free and independent expression.

Free Drawing Education was first put into practice by progressive teachers in Shinshû (Nagano prefecture) where Yamamoto's parents lived.[107] Once the Free Drawing movement had gained momentum with the success of the first exhibition at a Shinshû primary school in 1919, Yamamoto began the Farmers' Art Movement, with which he hoped to improve the impoverished lives and raise the cultural standard of the rural areas. Interestingly, Yamamoto implied in 1927 that the model for his efforts was the hand-craft workshop set up in a village in Smolensk by Princess Maria Tenishev. He wrote:

> '[her] philosophy in this project seems to echo that of William Morris in Britain. Princess Marie [sic] cherished the same hope which Morris had in the urban residents, in her peasants.[108]

With the help from his artist friends, he set up his first workshop in 1918. The first products were exhibited and sold at Mitsukoshi department store in Tokyo. Eventually, the Farmers' Art Research Centre was built in 1923.

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107. Shinshû had progressive schoolteachers who had responded to the individualism of *Shirakaba* and formed a kind of a branch movement, inviting the *Shirakaba* exhibition of Western art, including the three original pieces of sculpture by Rodin, in 1914. Imai Nobuo, 'Yanagi Sôetsu-to Shinshû Shirakaba Undô', *Yanagi Sôetsu* Zenshû, 'Geppô', no.20, 1982, pp.2-3.
108. 'Kokon-no Nômin Bijutsu (Farmers' Art, Past and Present)', *Kôgei Bijutsu-o Kataru*, Atoriesha, Tokyo, 1930, p.130.

Because the Farmers' Art Movement was modelled on European examples and the instructors were Western-style artists, the products reflected European-influenced taste rather than traditional local hand-crafts. Also, apart from Yamamoto's and his friends' personal contributions, the movement was largely funded by government bodies which felt the need to support efforts to improve the rural economy. But in 1937 Japan went to war with China, and rural labour was directed towards the war effort, and government funds were cut. The Farmers' Art Research Centre finally closed in 1939.

At first glance, Yamamoto's movement was the opposite of the New Mingei movement which was inspired by Yanagi's Mingei theory because the latter aimed at reviving traditional crafts (see Chapter Five), while the products of the former show Western taste. It was this apparent contrast that made Yanagi criticise Yamamoto's Farmers' Art Movement and call its products Western imitation toys without utility.[109] In reality, however, the New Mingei movement also provided producers with designs by the craft artists of the movement.[110] If one accepts the fact that

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109. Yanagi, 'Nômin Bijutsu-to Mingei Undô', *Yanagi Sôetsu* Zenshû, vol.10, p.171.
110. The New Mingei movement also took off in Shinshû. Yanagi invited two men who were skilled in the traditional cherry-wood craft to Tokyo and instructed them with designs in 1942. See Yanagi, 'Kabazaiku-no Denshû' *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.11, pp.534-8; also, Koyanagi Kintarô, 'Kabazaiku Denshûkai-no koto', *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, 'Geppô', no.12, 1981, pp.3-5, for the story of the Shinshû craftsman.

the price of an object often prevents it from actually being used for the purpose for which it was initially designed, and that carved figures can have a utility as decoration, it follows that the differences between the products of the two movements may not have been as great as Yanagi claimed. The farmers' sale of craft products in the 1920s certainly indicates that they were reasonablly well received by consumers in Tokyo. This, in turn, proves that the taste for folk art was part of the urban culture at the time.

The interest in the art of the distant past, primitive art and folk art, seems to have many roots. Exoticism opened up a fresh viewpoint for the young urban intellectuals, and they began to appreciate the quaint. Tsuda Seifû pointed out that Westerners tended to view an object freely, and thus were able to recognise beauty in objects made by nameless artisans; he also claimed that he himself shared such an approach.[111] The claim reflects the fact that the Japanese artists and intellectuals adopted the Westerner's eye and saw their own surroundings differently. Many artists went through the experience: Tomimoto confessed that he first appreciated old Japanese textiles when he saw them displayed in the South Kensington Museum[112]; Hamada Shôji also admitted that his eyes were opened to *getemono*, after he returned from England where he saw the rustic taste of some English

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111. *Bijutsu Shinpô*, vol.14, no.2, p.72.
112. 'Kôgeihin-ni Kansuru Shiki Yori', *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, p.454.

intellectuals, including Eric Gill, living in St Ives (see Chapter Four).

It would be wrong to put it all down to Western influence, however, as there were certainly cultural conditions which were ready to accept such tastes. Two major conditions of this kind were cultural centralisation, the result of the growing urban population and economy, and what one may call cultural imperialism following on the Japanese colonisation of Taiwan (1895) and Korea (1910). On the one hand, the modern urban population created its own taste, as seen in the New Craft Movement, and on the other developed a taste for certain art forms of the past. The revival of the Momoyama pottery in the 1930s can be seen in this light. As to the cultural imperialism, it is no accident that, once their values were 'discovered, 'many quality Korean crafts were brought to Japan, further stimulating public taste and, in turn, the market.

Likewise, anthropological interest in and aesthetic appreciation of Taiwanese aborigines and their crafts, and those of the South Pacific islanders, grew hand in hand with Japan's expansion into the region. An early interest in this 'primitive art' can be observed in an article entitled 'Dojin-no Kôgei-ni tsuite' (On the craft of the Aborigines), by Masaki Naohiko, the head of Tokyo School of Fine Arts, and published in *Bijutsu Shinpô* in 1913:

> Recently, aboriginal art has come into fashion. As civilisation progresses, people tend to take an interest in those primitive objects which stand

> opposite [to their surroundings]... Therefore, objects with the simplest structures and purest colours are preferred... Another point is that, because the objects look as if they were made with the maker's free will and because they show the maker's feelings in which any market concern - to attract or to sell - is absent, they seem to attract people with a high level of taste rather than ordinary people... Objects called 'peasant art' are inattentive to details... but because the works of civilised people, particularly those of Japanese craftsmen, are too attentive to details, they leave no room for the viewer's mind. One becomes tired of looking all day at such perfectly made objects. Objects that are inattentive to details, on the other hand, leave room for the viewer's imagination, so they do not tire them out.[113]

Masaki's article is accompanied by illustrations from his personal collection: Arabic, Indian, Persian and south Pacific vases, jars, chairs, textiles and baskets. His reference to the aborigines in general as 'barbarians' clearly indicates the underlying notion of the cultural superiority of Japan, which was presumably shared by the readers. Interests in Japanese local crafts were also encouraged by the local governments' (and the colonial governments') efforts in promoting their industries.

In *Kôgei Bijutsu-o Kataru*, the 1930 anthology of essays on craft, an article by Tsuda Shinobu, entitled '*Henkyônaru Kokusui-shugi o Haisekisu* (We Reject Narrow-minded Nationalism)', stands out for its different tone from the rest. As seen in relation to the New Craft Movement, Tsuda, like Iwamura Tôru earlier on, played an important role as an established craft artist who was one step ahead of his time and who encouraged the younger generation to proceed in the new direction. As a progressive artist

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113. *Bijutsu Shinpô*, vol.12, no.6, p.213.

with international and administrative experience, Tsuda was obviously wary of the advance of nationalism, which he knew to be a potential threat to modern art and craft.[114] In his essay, while admitting that contemporary craft had a duty to play its part in the national economy, he argued that healthy art and craft must reflect the reality of contemporary life, and that conservative nations tend to be retrospective and reject new styles in favour of the cultures of the past.[115] Tsuda's fears were to become reality several years later, as Japan rapidly advanced towards war.

When the conflict over the definition of art and craft between the two camps of the earlier generation ended in the victory of the pro-Western camp, the stage was set for the development of Japanese craft; but though the Japanese craft producers were no longer under pressure to 'follow the West', they were forced to develop their identity in the international market on the one hand, and to respond to the development of new aesthetics within Japan on the other.

As far as the individual producers were concerned, the problem, or the challenge, was not the technical standard but the taste. As Masaki Naohiko points out, the taste

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114. He was chosen as an international judge at the Paris International Exhibition of Decorative Arts in 1925, and when the Imperial Craft Society was formed he became a committee member.
115. *Kōgei Bijutsu-o Kataru*, pp.261-3.

for 'primitive' crafts which were 'inattentive to details' became a strong current among the urban population, setting the stage for the Mingei movement.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Early History and Members of the Mingei Movement

Most writings on the Mingei movement to date have treated it as having been started by Yanagi when he coined the word *mingei*, as if other early members were of little importance in the formation of the movement. Seeing the movement from another angle, however, provides a different view which relates the nature of the movement more closely to the general developments in craft than to Yanagi's personal interpretation of craft.

The history of the Mingei movement at its start is aptly summed up by Aoyama Jirô in a passage from his diary, written in February 1933.

> A foreigner appeared in the country of tea and antiques, and began to make ceramics.[1] True, he made friends with some young Japanese; it was the reckless act of an incompetent painter; and he had seen China. Still, the amateur Westerner stood on his feet as a potter in a country where ceramics meant skills. This is Bernard Leach. There was a Japanese who grew up in Western thoughts and had his eyes opened by Western ideas. He returned to the country of tea and antiques, and began making ceramics. He threw away the Western style - the softness of Leach - and stood in his own clothes. This is Tomimoto Kenkichi. So there were Leach and Tomimoto. Yanagi Sôetsu found inspiration from the amateurism (if this word is not acceptable, let us call it art or meekness) of the two potters. Beyond the tradition of tea and antiques, he discovered Korea. Thus connoisseurship became pure amateurism.

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1. 'Tea' here means the tea ceremony (see 'the *me-kiki* tradition' in Chapter Three).

> Under the wing of the two potters and a connoisseur, a potter was born in the country of tea and antiques. This potter went to England and trained himself to be Japanese. He rejected Leach's softness, stripped off Tomimoto's clothes and stood naked. He then banded together with Yanagi Sôetsu. They formed a whirlpool. Kawai Kanjirô, a technician, dived into it, and the curtain was dropped. These were historical events which took place in the country of tea and antiques.[2]

Aoyama and Ishimaru Shigeharu were among the initial six men who started the magazine *Kôgei* in 1931. They fell out with Yanagi and left their editorial positions, so that Yanagi had to continue the work virtually on his own. Today, after sixty years, these two names have virtually been forgotten by the historians of the movement.[3]

For the purpose of this thesis, the history of the pre-war Mingei movement will be divided into three phases. The first phase is from the time when interest in folk crafts emerged among the early members of the movement to the start of the publication of *Kôgei*, a monthly magazine

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2. 'Aoyama Jirô Diary' *Shinchô*, vol.90, no.6, Shinchôsha, Tokyo, May 1993, p.107. It is difficult to represent Aoyama's unique style of writing in translation. A certain amount of deviation from the original text was necessary in order to convey its meaning.
3. The members were: Tomimoto Kenkichi, Kawai Kanjirô, Hamada Shôji, Ishimaru Shigeharu, Aoyama Jirô and Yanagi Sôetsu. Even in Mizuo's *Hyôden Yanagi Sôetsu*, the most thorough study on Yanagi to date, when the names Aoyama and Ishimaru are mentioned they appear simply as part of a list of names or, in Ishimaru's case, as Yanagi's relative. Mizuo mentions the row between Yanagi and the two men over the magazine in *Hyôden* and also in the *General Catalogue of* Kôgei *and* Mingei (Nada Shobô, Tokyo, 1985, pp.6-7) in a little more detail. In both publications, the reference to this seemingly important event is kept to minimum. There is no mention of Aoyama's reputation as a '*me-kiki*' among the intellectual circle. Other writers on the movement - such as Okamura Kichiemon, Yoshida Shôya, Ama Toshimaro, and even Idekawa - completely ignore the roles played by Aoyama and Ishimaru.

promoting folk craft, in 1931. This phase was characterised by an intellectual connoisseurship among the members. The second phase lasted until 1934 when the Mingei Association was formed and the publication of *Kôgei* was handed from Jurakusha, the publisher, to the association. This phase was characterised by a diversity of attitudes among the members towards the folk crafts as well as towards the future direction of the movement. The third phase, which took the movement to the Pacific War period, saw Yanagi's dominance in both theory and practice.[4]

The main source of material explored in this thesis is the 120 volumes of the magazine *Kôgei*, a monthly magazine which was published between 1931 and 1951. Each issue of the magazine was produced as a craft work in its own

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4. These divisions are not usually adopted by Mingei historians. It is most common to start a history of the movement from 1926 when the Prospectus of the Japan Folk Craft Gallery was written under the authority of Yanagi, Tomimoto, Kawai and Hamada, with Aoyama and Ishimaru as co-operators in collecting objects. Incidentally, Okamura Kichiemon's view of Mingei history is unique: he takes Yanagi's concept of folk craft as the kind which existed in the *jôkamachi* (the local town that developed around a castle) during the Edo period, and calls it the first stage of Mingei, bringing the period up to Yanagi's discovery. Okamura further divides the period into the proto-Mingei (from the ancient society to the forming of medieval Japan), and the pre-Mingei (to around the Edo period). According to this view, Mingei entered its second period after Yanagi discovered the concept, when it was introduced to urban society and the production of the so-called New Mingei began. The third period is that of high postwar economic growth when machinery became the dominant force in production. The uniqueness of his view rests in the fact it concerns the actual products rather than the 'Mingei group' or even Yanagi himself. See *Yanagi Sôetsu-to Shoki Mingei Undô*, pp.32-4.

right. Quality hand-made paper was used for the text from the second issue. The front cover was cloth (hand-dyed or hand-woven), or quality hand-made paper. Contrary to convention, the style of the title on the front cover was different for each issue on. Some later issues had paper covers on which the title and patterns were drawn with lacquer. Reproductions, illustrations and cuts were also carefully designed and laid out. All these luxurious features made the magazine rather expensive. As the war with China progressed, particularly after 1939, shortage of material and economic difficulties made the publication increasingly scarce.[5]

Because researchers of the movement have so far mentioned the magazine more as craftworks than as the main communication vehicle of the movement, the latter function is often overlooked. The diversity of aesthetics within the movement, which characterises its second phase, can be best observed in the records of *zadankai* (round table discussions) organised by the magazine on various subjects concerning craft. *Zadankai* articles disappear from the magazine after 1934, with the one exception of no.78, published in 1937. The last '*Kôgei* readers' discussion evening' recorded in the issue is significant only because of the absence or silence of the people who initiated many

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5. The number of issues published each year (sometimes more than one issue came out at the same time) is shown in brackets: 1931(12), 1932(12), 1933(12), 1934(12), 1935(11), 1936(12), 1937(10), 1938(11), 1939(9), 1940(2), 1941(4), 1942(5), 1943(2), 1946(1), 1947(3), 1948(1) and 1951(1)

discussions on previous occasions.

From around 1934, the theoretical dominance of Yanagi becomes clear. The only major representative of 'other voices' is Mizutani Ryôichi, a senior public servant who supported the movement both in theory and financially, but who nevertheless became alienated from Yanagi after the Pacific War.

In 1939, as the publication of *Kôgei* became increasingly irregular, a second magazine - the *Mingei Monthly* (*Gekkan Mingei*) - started as a cheaper and popular version of *Kôgei*. The *Mingei Monthly* was not simply a popular version of the first magazine, however. It had specific purposes, mostly to serve as a vehicle of communication among the expanding 'New Mingei' producers.

4-1. The first phase: 1910s to 1931

Leach, Tomimoto and Hamada Shôji

Bernard Leach, who had spent his infancy in Japan, met Takamura Kôtarô in London and decided to go to Japan, arriving in 1909 (see Chapter One). He had planned to make a living by teaching etching to Japanese artists, and brought a press with him. But the artists, at least those to whom he was introduced by Kôtarô, were better informed and trained than he expected, and his 'pupils' were a handful of amateurs. The contact, however, had a more

profound effect than perhaps he originally imagined. Leach landed in the middle of the *Shirakaba* group as a Westerner whose level of interest in and awareness of art and literature matched theirs. The *Shirakaba* group welcomed Leach not as a teacher, but a friend who was exoticism personified.[6]

Leach began making pottery in 1910 under instruction from Ogata Kanzan IV, a master potter. Leach's pottery was 'attempts at emulating the friendly, eighteenth-century rural English Toft ware tradition in raku techniques'.[7] According to Conant, they were derived from the book *Quaint Old English Pottery* (1909), which Tomimoto had discovered at Maruzen, the leading importer of Western books in Tokyo.[8][Fig.49] Tomimoto helped Leach as a translator/interpreter and soon began making pottery himself (see Chapter Three). Tomimoto's experimental works shown at the exhibition in 1913 certainly reveal a strong influence from Persian and Western designs which he had seen at the South Kensington Museum.[Fig.50] His painter friend Minami Kunzô wrote in *Bijutsu Shinpô*:

> What we should note most is that, unlike ordinary works of art, which are made for alcoves and guest rooms and which limit themselves to 'works of art' in a narrow sense, his pieces encompass a wider sphere. In other words, Tomimoto is able to find his world even in the corner of the kitchen... This feeling of folk art has long been forgotten in Japan. These works arouse a most natural response in the depth of

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6. Ellen P. Conant demystifies much of the Leach legend in her article 'Leach, Hamada, Yanagi: Myth and Reality', pp.6-9.
7. Bernard Leach, *Hamada: potter*, p.106.
8. Conant, 'Leach, Hamada, Yanagi', p.7.

our heart.[9]

What Minami perceived in Tomimoto's pottery was an international tradition of folk art which Tomimoto shared with Bernard Leach. And this style obviously struck a sympathetic chord in Minami, who had spent some time in England with Tomimoto. But one should not assume that Minami's appreciation was confined to the circle of the 'returnees'. The *Bijutsu Shinpô* was a progressive art magazine and together with *Shirakaba*, which started in 1910, it had a strong influence on young intellectuals and art students who were hungry for information from the West and for a new identity.

Hamada Shôji (1894-1978) was one such student of ceramics - the one Aoyama described as the potter who 'went to England and trained himself to be Japanese'. It was not the elegance, refinement and technical perfection of his teacher Itaya Hazan's style that attracted him. 'The two "grand champions" of pottery were Leach and Tomimoto', Hamada thought at the time, and he decided that 'the work of Leach and Tomimoto had shown me the direction I wanted to follow'.[10] Hamada recalls visiting Tomimoto in Nara around 1916 when he was working at the Ceramics Testing Institute in Kyoto, and how he admired him for his advanced thinking. Hamada's admiration for Tomimoto and what he represented became stronger when he went to visit Yanagi in Abiko where Leach had his kiln, in 1919.

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9. *Bijutsu Shinpô*, vol.13, no.2, 1913, pp.74-5.
10. Bernard Leach, *Hamada: potter*, pp.93-4.

Hamada's account of the meal at Yanagi's house reveals that it was the whole new approach to life that attracted him:

> [original in English] Leach began with bread first, while the Japanese were having their rice first and bread later. It was wonderful to watch everybody adjusting freely to his own life-style[sic]. This was the life-style[sic] that Tomimoto and Leach had chosen, and I felt that it was the truest way to live out this particular period, this time of history, and how fitting it was for me also to join in such a way of life. This was true life, I felt. I ate a little of what was served me and even joined in eating the *nattô* - what Leach called bean cheese - spread on bread! This, too, was not only good, but a most interesting way of combining foods.[11]

When Leach was invited to start a kiln in Cornwall, Hamada asked if he could accompany him to help set it up. Hamada's Japanese patron provided him with money for his passage to England.

While helping Leach at the kiln, Hamada visited some of Leach's acquaintances in the area. In their country houses Hamada saw how traditional English folkware was used as part of their daily life:

> [original in English] When Leach and I visited Mrs. Mairet, the mother of English hand-weaving, in Ditchling, Sussex, she served us dinner using a complete set of slipware, which I have never forgotten. The dishes were products of Fishley, a potter who preserved the good traditions of England, the last one to do so... When you are invited to dinner by someone, you often notice, as a potter, that dishes of lower quality are used together with superior pieces. But Mrs. Mairet served food on the best dishes, a perfect score.[12]

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11. Leach, *Hamada: potter*, p.98.
12. Leach, *Hamada: potter*, p.131.

It was experiences such as those at Mrs. Mairet's or Eric Gill's that made Hamada decide to live in Mashiko, a city that still retained the qualities of a country town - away from Tokyo, the central city, yet not too far for easy travelling.[13] In Mashiko, he eventually built a farmhouse for himself and his family. But a more important experience he had in Cornwall determined his attitudes towards life:

> [original in English] I often went off to the cliffs. One day I was lying on a slab of stone on the cliff for a long time. Unknown to me a cuckoo came near. I never expected a cuckoo, a wild one, to come so close to man, almost to my head. Suddenly the bird cried out "Cuckoo". I was startled - and then I *knew*. I was twenty-seven years old when that happened. "Ah," I thought, "I am here. I know it." Any explanation added is nothing more than a betrayal of that experience... From there begins my real life.[14]

Later in the book, Hamada nevertheless adds a small explanation to his experience:

> [original in English] Whatever one sees is a reflection of oneself. Without you there is not the objective world or the subjective - the object never exists without the subject. This is not taught in schools; this is what the cuckoo taught me on the cliffs in Cornwall.[15]

It can be said that Hamada's direction in life and work was decided in these years in Cornwall.[Fig.51] On his return to Japan (March 1924), he began to proceed in that

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13. Hamada writes, '[original in English] In England I felt I learned the way the English appreciate their countryside. People there were not just escaping to the country; they had one leg in the city and went there any time they wanted or needed to and participated in the community, yet at the same time they truly and naturally enjoyed living in the country.'(Leach, *Hamada: potter*, p.152.)
14. Leach, *Hamada: potter*, pp.137-8.
15. Leach, *Hamada: potter*, p.169.

direction, both in work and in lifestyle. In Kyoto where he stayed at Kawai's house, he was eager to explore his native culture with fresh eyes:

> [original in English] I could not contain myself. I wanted to see Japan again.
>
> We [Kawai and I] walked everywhere, visiting antique shops and pottery workshops. I liked to look into the high shelves in antique shops where the dust collected, or under the tables, to see what had been neglected. Usually the things kept in such places were what people had not bought, things left unsold. This was all very refreshing for me to see. For instance, an oil pot with a little handle is often used on a Buddhist altar for illumination. I felt that this would be perfect to drink coffee from. I looked at all these neglected articles in this way. There were so many things that could be adapted for use.[16]

Hamada's strange preoccupations perplexed his friend Kawai at first. Eventually, however, he began to see Hamada's point and joined him. A few weeks later Yanagi Sôetsu, whom Hamada had met briefly when he visited Leach, moved to Kyoto from Tokyo which had been destroyed by the earthquake in September the previous year.

Yanagi Sôetsu

Yanagi Sôetsu (1889-1961) was one of the youngest members of the *Shirakaba* group. His contributions to the magazine included editing, designing and writing. Comments on Yanagi which appear in the 'From The Editing Room' section of the magazine indicate the respect of the senior members for Yanagi's learning as well as his devotion to the visual quality of the magazine.[17] During *Shirakaba*'s

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16. Leach, *Hamada: potter*, p.149.
17. See *Shirakaba*, vol.2, no.1, p.131.

lifetime, Yanagi wrote a number of articles on religion, psychology and art. These essays show his wide knowledge in philosophy, religion and literature, of both East and West, notably of Buddhism and Christianity.

His first collection of essays, *Shûkyô to sono Shinri* (Religion and its Truth), was published in 1919. Its first essay, from 1917, is entitled 'Shûkyô-teki "Mu" ("Naught" in Religion)'. In it he argues that 'naught 'or 'void' in religious thought is not a negation (of being, for instance), but a concept beyond duality. 'Naught', Yanagi claims, is secession from all relativity and discrimination. His concept of the 'absolute' as something that one should grasp by intuition (although he does not use this word here) - something beyond logic - which would have a central place in his *mingei* theory, is already present in this early essay.

Another essay in which his most important idea can be observed, is one entitled 'Temperament in Philosophy' (1913):

> I consider the individual temperament as the primary basis of philosophy. We never speculate in order to obtain abstract and objective truth outside our own self... We do not advocate Rationalism as the result of our logical conclusion in which reason is regarded as the ultimate activity of the mind. Before reaching such an abstract judgement, the actual temperament which values reason requires such doctrine. We do not assert Pragmatism as the result of a consideration that the actual effect is the most important matter. An undeniable temperamental urge causes people to claim such philosophy.[18]

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18. Yanagi, *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.2, Chikuma Shobô, Tokyo, 1981, p.214.

This idea is particularly clear in sentences such as 'Individuality is what embraces truth, and the expression of individuality is in itself the creation of truth.'[19] One may say that, by advocating the existence of the absolute within the individual, Yanagi provided philosophical support to the worship of the individual by the *Shirakaba* group. Yanagi then moves from philosophy to art:

> Neither the painter nor the poet waits for an abstract theory in order to paint a picture or write a poem. They follow their intuition and create as their temperament leads them. When they attempt to start from clear logic, their work always loses its life and eventually their art dies out.[20]

The poets who captivated Yanagi for their mystical quality were William Blake and Walt Whitman.[21] For Yanagi, they were the two poets who pursued divinity in the self. Yanagi published *Uiriamu Burêku* (William Blake), a 900-page biography and discussion of Blake's art and poetry, in 1914. He continued to write on Blake and Whitman, and in 1931 began publishing a magazine, *Burêku-to Hoittoman* (Blake and Whitman), with Jugaku Bunshô, his friend and a scholar of English literature.

Although Yanagi embraced the *Shirakaba* philosophy of individualism, one striking difference divides him from

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19. Yanagi, *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.2, p.222.
20. Yanagi, *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.2, p.229.
21. For the influences of Whitman on the *Shirakaba* writers, see Tozawa Yukio, *Kokkyô-o Koeta Bungaku*, Eichôsha Shuppan, Tokyo, 1976, pp.106-119, and Suzuki Yasuaki, *Shirakabaha-no Bungaku-to Hoittoman*, Tokyo Seibunkan, 1977.

the rest of the major *Shirakaba* writers. While other writers of the magazine often looked into themselves, Yanagi always kept his personal thoughts to himself. Although he spoke of individuality, he did not reveal his own individuality: he never left autobiographical essays or writings analysing his thoughts or feelings about himself.[22] In other words, he never admitted his personal weaknesses in published writings, while the admission of one's own weaknesses was the starting-point for other *Shirakaba* writers, such as Shiga Naoya, Arishima Takeo and Takamura Kôtarô. It may be suggested that Yanagi's philosophical writings and his later essays on craft earned much of their credibility precisely because of the lack of an exposure of his personality. The reader had no choice but to feel Yanagi the orator, rather than a person, behind these lines.

In 1916, Yanagi travelled to Korea and China for two months.[23] Prior to the trip, he had received a visit from Asagawa Noritaka, a collector of Korean pottery living and working in Korea. Yanagi's younger sister was married to an officer in the government-general in Korea. In Korea,

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22. There is one essay, 'Imôto-no shi' (Death of my younger sister), published in *Shirakaba* (November 1921), which is an account of the last days of his sister in Korea a few months earlier. This essay, however, can hardly be called autobiographical. Interestingly, his letters to Leach, in English, seem to reveal his personal feelings more freely than any letter to his Japanese friends.
23. For the chronology, see Maeda Masaaki et.al., 'Yanagi Sôetsu Kenkyû Shiryô', originally published in *Mingei*, Japan Folk Craft Museum, Tokyo (dates vary), extracted and circulated to the members of Mumeikai, a study group, as at 1976.

he met Asagawa Noritaka's younger brother Takumi, also an ardent collector of Korean pottery. The Asagawa brothers had a strong attachment to the art and people of Korea, and they became indispensable guides and supporters in Yanagi's various activities there, including the preparations for and founding of the Korean People's Art Museum and various fund-raising concerts by Mrs Yanagi (a professional soprano singer).

After the trip to Korea, Yanagi's interests were drawn to Korean pottery. It was also in 1916 that Leach came to Japan for the second time after about a year in China and built a kiln in the corner of Yanagi's house. Leach recalls:

> Living beside a kiln deepened this attraction [towards Korean pottery] and caused [Yanagi] to consider the issues of craftsmanship in our time, especially the transitions attendant upon the change from local folk crafts to individual, or artist craftsmanship. Naturally the English movement under William Morris was the subject of much discussion, and I clearly recollect how he questioned me about an equivalent term for peasant or folk art, in Japanese.[24]

Perhaps what drew Yanagi closer to the Korean art and people was the Korean Independence Movement which culminated in the events of the 1st of March 1919. The movement met violent repression including massacres of women and children by the Japanese army and the police under the colonial government. Yanagi wrote a series of

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24. Leach, 'Introduction', in Yanagi, *The Unknown Craftsman: A Japanese Insight into Beauty,* adapted by Bernard Leach, Kôdansha International, Tokyo and New York, 1972, p.94.

articles expressing his sympathy for the Koreans. After the Pacific War, Yanagi's perception of the Korean people as tragic and their art as sorrowful, was criticised by both Korean and Japanese scholars as a simplistic projection of political and social conditions in Korea onto its people and art.[25] However, the critics acknowledge Yanagi's humanism and his extreme courage in denouncing the violent oppression of the colony by the Japanese at a time when criticising the government meant taking a personal risk. It was as a token of friendship towards the Korean people and to express his admiration for their art that he planned to establish a museum of Korean people's art in Korea. After writing the proposal in January 1921, he began organising a series of fund-raising activities (exhibitions of Korean ceramics in Japan, giving lectures and musical concerts in Korea, and so on), and the museum was established in April 1924.[26]

Yanagi's interest in Korean white porcelain triggered a wider interest among the circle of young intellectuals. Aoyama Jirô was one of them. Up to that time, connoisseurs had largely collected celadon wares from the Koryô period (918-1392), but Yanagi and his friends began collecting the less valuable and more common porcelain from the Choson period (1392-1910).[Fig.52]

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25. See, for example, Choe Ha-Rim, 'Yanagi Sôetsu-no Kankoku Bijutsu-kan', *Tenbô*, Chikuma Shobô, Tokyo, July 1976, pp.94-104; Idekawa Naoiki, *Mingei; Riron-no Hôkai-to Yôshiki-no Tanjô*, pp.159-198.
26. It was one of these exhibitions of Korean ceramics that Kawai Kanjirô saw and that became the catalyst for the change in his ceramics.

An important discovery for Yanagi and for Japanese art also took place in the mid 1920s. In 1924, a few months after the Great Kantô Earthquake, Yanagi travelled to Nagano prefecture (central Japan), where he saw some roughly carved wooden images of Buddha by Mokujiki Gogyô Shônin, a wondering monk in the eighteenth century.[27] [Fig.53] With assistance from Komiyama, the owner of the carvings, Yanagi commenced his research on the monk, whose works had not been widely known before. Yanagi obtained writings by the monk, and travelled to various locations around Japan where the monk had left carved images. He began to publish a series of articles on Mokujiki Shônin in *Josei*, a progressive women's magazine.

Yanagi was offered a lecturership at the Dôshisha University in Kyoto in 1924 and this prompted him to leave Tokyo which had been shattered by the earthquake. In Kyoto Yanagi met Hamada again, and through Hamada he met Kawai Kanjirô. Kawai Hamada were to become an important inspiration and support for Yanagi.

Kawai Kanjirô

When Kawai Kanjirô (1890-1966) decided to become a potter,

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27. *Mokujiki Shônin* is a general term referring to those monks who take a vow to limit their diet to raw fruits and nuts (excluding grains). The monk in question was named Itô, but I refer to him as Mokujiki Gogyô Shônin (or simply Mokujiki Shônin) as he is generally called this in the context of Yanagi's research and collections.

he entered the Ceramics Department of the Tokyo Industrial High School. His classmates, he writes, were studying ceramics in order to get jobs in large ceramics companies, while his ambition was to make pottery for his own satisfaction.[28] He met Hamada, a junior student, who quickly became his good friend. On graduating from the school in 1914, Kawai began working at the Kyoto Ceramics Testing Institute as a technician. Two years later, Hamada joined him. At the Institute, Kawai experimented with numerous glazes and techniques with Hamada, while exhibiting at Nôten. In 1917 he left the institute to become a technical adviser for Kiyomizu Rokuwa who was the fifth generation of a line of potters who had succeeded to the name of Kiyomizu Rokubei. Kiyomizu Rokuwa was a distinguished potter who is now considered to have been a major force in modernising the traditional Kyoto pottery. To be his adviser for two years would have secured Kawai's reputation as technician. Like Hamada, however, Kawai drew aesthetic inspiration from the works of Bernard Leach and Tomimoto Kenkichi. He called them 'people who started a renaissance of Japanese ceramics' and claimed that 'through them, beauty that is intimate to us was resurrected in Japanese ceramics.'[29]

While Hamada was away in England, Kawai established

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28. Kawai Kanjirô, 'Kikai-wa Atarashii Nikutai', Text responsibility Tsurumi Shunsuke, *Kawai Kanjirô-to Shigoto*, Kawai Kanjirô Memorial Museum, Kyoto, 1986, pp.118-9.
29. Kawai Kanjirô, 'Kikai-wa Atarashii Nikutai', *Kawai Kanjirô-to Shigoto*, p.119.

himself with techniques that produced ceramics in the style of the Sung, T'ang, and other Chinese imperial kilns.[Figs.54-5] He was noticed by Okuda Seiichi, a highly influential scholar of ceramics who described Kawai as 'a new comet in ceramics'.[30] Through Okuda, Kawai became acquainted with some of Japan's business and political leaders, who made their collections available to him to study. In 1921 Kawai held an exhibition in which he displayed his successful recreation of various Chinese-style ceramics. But Yanagi Sôetsu bitterly criticised Kawai in a review of the exhibition.[31] Being a sensitive man with a searching mind, Kawai went to see an exhibition of Choson (Yi dynasty) pottery organised by Yanagi. The quietude and warmth of the objects at the exhibition completely overwhelmed Kawai, so much so that he could not bring himself to speak to Yanagi at the exhibition. Kawai eagerly waited for his close friend Hamada to return from England. Hamada recalls:

> [original in English] When I came back from England, and [Kawai] asked me immediately what kind of work I planned to do in the future, I realized he had been stripped clean of all the courage he had originally. I said I was not interested in making or creating something novel or refined or acceptable from the standpoint of the usual idea of beauty, but that I was aiming at making correct and healthy things, pottery that is practical and not forced, that responds to the nature of the materials.[32]

Yanagi moved to Kyoto in April 1924. Kawai refused to

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30. This phrase is often quoted in writings on Kawai. For Kawai's biographical details, I largely refered to the chronology in *Kawai Kanjirô-to Shigoto*.
31. The actual article by Yanagi was referred to both by Kawai and Yanagi, but has not been identified to date.
32. Leach, *Hamada: potter*, p.151.

meet Yanagi when Hamada, on his return to Japan, first attempted to introduce the two to each other. But Hamada eventually succeeded in doing so. Once they met, they shared their admiration for Hamada's slipware and Yanagi's Mokujiki carvings and quickly established a close friendship. It would be wrong, however, to think that Kawai had been 'influenced' by Yanagi through those meetings. On the contrary, it seems more likely that Kawai's influence on Yanagi was greater than vice-versa. As seen in Hamada's recollection, Kawai was searching for a new inspiration to develop his own art at the time.[33] Furthermore, there is a possibility that Kawai had come to recognise the specific beauty of ceramics made by nameless craftspeople, before Hamada even left for England: Kawai referred in 1949 to a talk he gave around 1916 or 1917 in which he praised 'nameless ceramics' and argued that individualistic ceramics could not surpass them.[34] No record or anything in Kawai's writings has been found to support this statement, however. To date, the earliest text which reveals his thoughts on the subject is his lecture entitled 'Tôki-no Shosanshin' (The Heart of the Product in Ceramics), delivered in 1924 at the Kyoto

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33. Hamada describes Kawai's trauma as he saw it: 'He had tried imitating Chinese techniques, but he could not outdo the Chinese pots; his work always fell short of what he was trying to emulate, and because of this he became louder and louder. Kawai probably knew this' (Leach, *Hamada: potter*, p. 150.
34. 'Kikai-wa Atarashii Nikutai' in *Kawai Kanjirô-to Shigoto*, p.119.

Imperial Museum (now the Kyoto National Museum).[35]

In the lecture, Kawai gives three motives for the production of objects: one is religious faith; another is to make a living from it; and the last is beauty. Out of the three, he claims, the first motive produced beautiful objects of the past, because faith cleansed and purified the artifice of the individual which would have otherwise appeared in the objects. Beauty followed devotion in such an environment. He refers to the art of the Tenpyô period in Japan,[36] of the Six Dynasties to the T'ang period in China, the historical Buddha's time in India and medieval Europe. In ceramics, he claims, the same kind of beauty manifests itself in the products made under the second motive, that is, in order to exchange them for necessities of life. He notes two things about them:

> We realise how the results of this kind of work of the past, and to a certain extent of today, are not appreciated for their beauty. Conversely, we also realise that we often perceive the unique character of the beauty of nameless products of the past, as if the beauty is intentional. This often happens when a person from one region sees the products of another region.[37]

So he recognises that the beauty of mass-produced items is seldom appreciated, and that when it is appreciated by

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35. While chronological sources indicate that the lecture was held some time in August, the fact that the lecture was published by the museum on 27th June suggests that the lecture had been delivered earlier. I am grateful to Mrs Tamae Sagi, curator of Kawai Kanjirô's House, for providing me with a copy of the lecture paper.
36. Tenpyô is the name of an era during which the culture of the Nara period (710-794) was at its height.
37. 'Tôki-no Shosanshin', *Lectures at the Kyoto Imperial Museum*, vol.1, 1924, p.11.

persons who often belong to a different sphere from that of the products either in time or in distance, the beauty is mistakenly considered intentional. Kawai's perception here echoes the growing interest and appreciation of folk craft or peasant art among artists and intellectuals (see Chapter Three). But Kawai, an inquisitive potter, wanted to find out how this unique beauty comes about in pottery:

> Let us imagine the kiln, the workshop in the mountains or deep in the forests, where these pieces of pottery are still produced as they always have been... [To draw patterns with glaze] they must draw on hundreds of pieces each day in order to make a living - when one sees the speed in which they work, who can say that they enjoy their work?
>
> In that form of production, the workers necessarily follow the most simplified procedure. When the material is handled in the most economical way possible, without impeding the production process, the products are furnished with beauty... Beauty is not intended but is latent...
>
> Perhaps they asked the lantern makers or travelling painters to supply them with the original design. Through repetition, however, the original design was forgotten. Without the knowledge of the maker, the resulting products became imprinted with the living breath of the people.[38]

In his 1927 version, he gives a more concrete vision to the last paragraph:

> He [the worker] draws birds without thinking about birds, draws grass without imagining grass. In the end, he would draw a horse while thinking about a cow. The butterfly may change its shape to a cloud, then to lines and to dots. I have often seen this happening. The grace of repetition is that the original gets forgotten while a new life springs up from it...[39]

Thus Kawai believes that the unique beauty of the

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38. 'Tôki-no Shosanshin', *Lectures at the Kyoto Imperial Museum*, p.13.
39. 'Tôki-no Shosanshin', 1927, *Kawai Kanjirô-to Shigoto*, p.110.

'nameless, ordinary pottery' comes from the process of repetition which takes away the traces of the individual and diffuses the pattern, which was originally individualistic, into a common factor, as it were, of a wider community. In other words, the individual intentions are worn away through endless repetition; and as individual intentions are worn away, the beauty emerges. Kawai calls this process 'the pure land of operation'.[40] The Pure Land (*jôdo*) is a Buddhist concept of paradise. In this context, it refers to this specific condition in which the working process itself purifies the products and blesses them with beauty. Interestingly, Kawai considers that the beauty comes from the repetition which is the principle of the division of labour, a necessary form of mass production. He concludes that:

> If they had the machinery as we have today, they would certainly have used it. In this sense, the machine-made pottery of today can be claimed as a blood relation, and the direct extension in the heart, of the pottery of the past, the beauty of which we acknowledge...
>
> We cannot simply dismiss machine-made products as ugly.[41]

The pottery which is made with an intention to produce beauty often strays into the trap of affectation, he says. At the same time, it is impossible for one who appreciates the beauty of ordinary products, to return to the state of the unintentional. Thus, if one desires to achieve the same kind of beauty as the products of the past, one must

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40. 'Tôki-no Shosanshin', *Lectures at the Kyoto Imperial Museum*, p.16.
41. 'Tôki-no Shosanshin', *Lectures at the Kyoto Imperial Museum*, p.13.

consciously strive to attain a state of unconsciousness.

Kawai was an intellectual potter. His essay was meant to be written for potters and collectors, and above all, for himself:

> Beauty is nothing but crystalised blood and sweat. If one only sees the result and not its origin, one will be infatuated with beauty...
>
> As paintings and sculpture woke up to beauty and began to be infected with individualism, ceramics is following suit. But the same road in ceramics is often filled with danger. When beauty is aimed consciously, the work rarely achieves anything beyond affectation. The work may have feelings but is not supported by life... The work of the individual is fierce but self-seeking... It is useless to seek beauty. Let us just choose the correct material, the natural process and good organisation.[42]

Even though he might have conceived the idea first in the 1910s, it is likely that his ideas became clearer after Hamada's return from England earlier in 1924. For the young master technician to make these statements, a

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42. 'Tôki-no Shosanshin', *Kawai Kanjirô-to Shigoto*, p.112. Idekawa Naoki claims that 'Tôki-no Shosanshin' was written under Yanagi's influence immediately after their acquaintance began, and he presents it as a proof of Kawai's naïvety (*Mingei: Riron-no Hôkai-to Yôshiki-no Tanjô*, p.227). I disagree with Idekawa on this matter for three reasons. Firstly, the content of this essay flows naturally into his belief in the future development and use of machinery, which is alien to Yanagi's stand. Secondly, Yanagi's experience with pottery making by 1924, particularly concerning mass-production practices at local kilns, had been too limited for him to be able to convince a distinguished ceramist like Kawai. Given that Yanagi's first 'theory' was not written until 1927, it is more natural to think that Kawai's practical knowledge stimulated Yanagi to combine his perception of the characteristics of ordinary pottery with thoughts on the production process. Lastly, Kawai himself states that the thought came to him at almost the same time, but separately, as Yanagi began to advocate it ('Kikai-wa Atarashii Nikutai', *Kawai Kanjirô-to Shigoto*, p.119).

serious re-evaluation of his own work must have been under way. Accordingly, his style changed dramatically.[Fig.56] His practice of giving complicated and difficult names to his works also stopped around this time.

The concept of Mingei

Hamada moved to Mashiko later in 1924 in order to pursue the life and work he had planned earlier. In Kyoto, Yanagi, Kawai and Hamada often went to the local ceramics markets to 'dig up' objects which satisfied their taste. The writings of Hamada, Kawai and Yanagi around this time confirm that their participation in the appreciation of objects was on equal terms. It is most likely, also, that Yanagi was absorbing the technicalities of ceramics production from the two potter friends.

While visiting the stalls at the markets, they learned that the sellers were calling their cheaper commodities, from which the men found their favourite objects, *getemono* (ordinary or low-grade items), as opposed to *jôtemono* (high-grade items), which were picked by the more upmarket shop-owners. So when Yanagi first wrote an essay on the beauty of folk crafts, he gave it the title 'Getemono-no Bi' (The Beauty of Ordinary Objects). The essay was published in the *Echigo Taimusu* in 1926. But the word *getemono* began to refer to 'strange, weird' things, sometimes even women (in the context of sexual

preferences).[43] There was a need for an appropriate word to express what they meant.

Around late 1925, they coined the word *mingei* as the abbreviation for *minshû-teki kôgei*, or folk-style craft. Various opinions exist concerning the date of the invention of the word and the people who were involved in it. Yoshida Kôjirô, who compiled Yanagi's chronology, claims that the making of the word took place on 28th December 1925 when Yanagi, Hamada and Kawai were in the train on their way to visit some of the Mokujiki sites in Mie prefecture.[44] Mizuo also takes this view in his *Yanagi Sôetsu: A Critical Biography*.

However, according to Okamura Kichiemon, who had a long and close association with Yanagi, Yanagi himself never clearly indicated either the date or the people involved in making the word.[45] In view of the evidence that finding a term for 'folk craft' had been in Yanagi's mind since he discussed the concept with Leach in the mid-1910s, it seems more realistic to think that the discussion continued for some time at various locations with different people before *mingei* was finally decided on, rather than that the word suddenly sprang up among them on 28th December 1925. At any rate, the word *mingei* was used in the Prospectus of the Establishment of a Japan

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43. Jugaku Bunshô suggests that the meaning of *getemono* has been twisted since the time Yanagi used it in the publication (*Yanagi Sôetsu-to Tomo-ni*, pp.63-4).
44. Maeda et.al., 'Yanagi Sôetsu Kenkyû Shiryô', II.
45. *Yanagi Sôetsu-to Shoki Mingei Undô*, pp.24-8.

Folk Art Gallery (*Nihon Mingei Bijutsukan Setsuritsu Shuisho*), which was drawn up on 10th January 1926 when Yanagi, Kawai and Hamada were staying at Mount Kôya.

The prospectus consisted of three short sections: the Purpose; the Project; and the Funds. It was also accompanied by images of some of their collections, such as a 'horse-eye' plate, an underglaze noodle cup, two 'ship chests', textile and woodwork, as examples of folk crafts.

The Purpose opens with a provocative statement: 'The time is ripe, we who share an aim have come together and plan the establishment of a Japan Folk Craft Gallery.'[46] It continued by arguing that the mainstream of beauty resided within the ordinary products which previously had not attracted attention, that the domain of folk craft was purely Japanese, and that the creative genius of the Japanese was best expressed in this genre. 'We have come to an age in which we can recognise their beauty', it claims, urging that examples of folk crafts be collected before they disappeared. The section is signed by Tomimoto, Kawai, Hamada and Yanagi.

The Project section describes the planned collection: ceramics, woodwork, lacquerwork, metalwork, textiles, painting and sculpture, all should be collected. The collection would not be limited to old items but would

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46. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol 16, p.5.

include contemporary products and the products of other regions and countries, from Korea to the West. Importantly, the objects would be selected on the basis of beauty alone, and it was hoped that the whole museum would itself be an aesthetic object.[47]

The Fund section indicated that some people, mostly their established patrons, had already donated sums of money.[48] As the selector of objects, Aoyama Jirô was added to the first four men. The secretarial work was to be handled by Aoyama and Ishimaru Shigeharu, and Uchiyama Shôzô would do the accounting work. Thirty copies of the prospectus were privately published and circulated among prospective supporters.

The birth of Yanagi's 'Mingei theory'

'Getemono-no Bi', Yanagi's first 'theory' of folk craft, was published in the *Echigo Taimusu* of 19th September, 1926. It was revised in the following year and was included in a collection of his essays, *Zakki-no Bi* (The Beauty of Ordinary Wares), published by Kôseikai. In 1942 it was further revised and the title was changed to 'Zakki-no Bi' in *Watashi-no Nengan*.[49] The article

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47. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol 16, pp.3-12.
48. Four names are mentioned in the Prospectus. Yoshida Shôtarô was a strong supporter of Yanagi's research into the Mokujiki Shônin; Nojima Yasuzô, a well-known photographer, was Tomimoto's close friend and patron; Itô Sukeemon was also Tomimoto's patron; and Iseki Sôzan was Hamada's benefactor.
49. In 'Zakki-no Bi', Yanagi replaced the term *getemono* with *zakki* because *getemono* was increasingly associated with vulgar meanings.

developed into the form of 'theory' which is now familiar to the students of the Folk Craft Movement when it was published as 'Kôgei-no Bi' (The Beauty of Crafts) in *Dai-chôwa* (Grand Harmony), a magazine run by Mushanokôji and others, after *Shirakaba* ended with the Great Kantô Earthquake.

'Kôgei-no Bi' was written as part of a series of nine articles between 1927 and 1928, entitled 'Kôgei-no Michi'(The Way of Craft). The series was revised and published by Guroria Sosaete in December 1928.[50] Critics agree that this article 'Kôgei-no Bi' includes all of Yanagi's ideas of craft as well as his later development of Buddhist aesthetics.[51]

The last part of 'Kôgei-no Michi' is a summary of Yanagi's ideas on craft in a question-and-answer format. Here, Yanagi divides craft into art crafts and folk crafts: the former are produced by individual producers while the latter are made by ordinary people for the use of ordinary people. The art crafts are expensive products of conscious artists, and are sold to a small number of people, while the folk crafts are cheap products by unconscious artisans. The folk crafts are subdivided into the guild crafts (which have a creative character) and the

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50. See Appendix 3 for a full translation of the article. I used the revised 1928 version for the translation.
51. For example, Mizuo, *Hyôden Yanagi Sôetsu*, p.135. Idekawa Naoki, a major critic of Yanagi's 'theory', also shares this valuation of the article. See *Mingei: Riron-no Hôkai-to Yôshiki-no Tanjô*, p.21.

capitalist crafts (which have a mechanical character); and the art crafts are subdivided into individualistic crafts (which have an individualistic character) and aristocratic crafts (which play with techniques). This structure is useful in understanding the perspective in which Yanagi set his folk-craft aesthetics.

The major content of 'Kôgei-no Bi' is, of course, an aesthetic reevaluation of folk craft. The first striking feature of the article, however, is the oratorical and conclusive tone of his style. Jugaku Bunshô, Yanagi's close friend and fellow researcher of William Blake and Whitman, quotes section 2 of the article and describes its impact:

> They were refreshing words we had not heard from anyone for a long time. When human beings are told that what they have believed to be a long-standing authority is in fact not so, the reversal of values almost instinctively causes them to experience a kind of catharsis. People were shocked, and listened to the new voice. His tone (style of writing) was also decisive and straightforward, and the words sank directly into the heart of the reader. Phrases such as 'If they endure not the use' or 'were they not healthy' have also been typical of his style since *Religion and its Truth*. The succinct and crisp style draws the reader into agreeing with the author. Assertive statements such as: 'all beauty comes from the spirit of service'; or 'in the world of crafts, no sickness is allowed. Illness would not approach a [busy] worker' are in fact not complete truth. They had not gone though a vigorous process of logical examination. The passionate zeal of the author, however, compels the reader to accept them without questioning. More than a few people have actually attained religious salvation from the teachings of

'The Way of Craft'.[52]

Jugaku is right when he claims that the article was Yanagi's own religious confession.[53] In fact, it was the gospel of his newly found religion called 'beauty'. The admiration for and analysis of ordinary pottery and other objects as experienced by his potter friends - Leach, Tomimoto, Hamada and Kawai - were all included here. Yanagi was aware of his own lack of practical knowledge, and the the information his friends could provide him with would always be, for him, second-hand.[54] On the other hand, he was fully confident in his own aesthetic judgement of objects and his abilities to argue metaphysics. So Yanagi added his own experience and metaphysical interpretation of beauty to his friends' tangible experience, decisively turning the passage into a kind of gospel. The article certainly reveals the extent and depth of his knowledge of various religions and mysticism in art: for example, Blake's words 'busy bees have no time for sorrow' are inconspicuously inserted in his argument.

In the years between 1925 and 1927, Japan experienced a

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52. 'Mingei Undô-no Himitsu', *Yanagi Sôetsu-to Tomo-ni*, Shûeisha, Tokyo, 1980, pp.67-8. The article was first published in *Tankô*, 1960. Emori, a critic of the tea ceremony and a close friend of Ishimaru's, remembers the strong impression he received from the powerful opening words of 'Kôgei-no Bi' (*Geppô* no.16, 1982, p.1).
53. *Yanagi Sôetsu-to Tomo-ni*, p.63.
54. Okamura Kichiemon told me at more than one of my interviews with him, that Yanagi had said to him: 'Because I am not a producer, I can never describe techniques in the first person. You should become able to do both - theory and practice.'

wave of social, political and economic turmoil. These years saw the passing of the Public Security Law, which allowed the authorities to increase thought control, followed by a financial panic. They were a lively time for Japanese craft as well. Tsuda Shinobu's return from France in 1925 prompted the new movement among his pupils, such as Takamura Toyochika and Kitahara Senroku, to form the Mukei in 1926. Its first exhibition was held in the following year. While Mukei aimed to create craft for the life of the urban upper middle class, the Imperial Craft Society, also established in 1926, aimed for the industrialisation of craft (see Chapter Three). In the same year, Yamamoto Kanae, Takamura Toyochika, Hirokawa Matsugorô and others published the first issue of the magazine *Kôgei Jidai* (Craft Age). The Research Institute of Oriental Ceramics, led by Okuda Seiichi's former Saikokai group, first published the magazine *Tôji* (Ceramics) in 1927. Lastly, a craft section was created in the government exhibition Teiten in 1927.

At the time Yanagi's interest in folk craft was developing into a project to start a museum, he was part of a circle of artistic and literary connoisseurs among the urban intellectuals which went beyond the immediate circle of the *Shirakaba* group. Yanagi's wife remembers that from the early 1920s, when the Yanagis moved from Abiko to Tokyo, Aoyama Jirô began to frequent their house.[55] Aoyama and Yanagi's nephew, Ishimaru, were close friends

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55. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, 'Geppô', no.16, 1982, p.6.

and they were associated with Kurahashi Tôjiro (1887-1946), a businessman trained in ceramics.[56] Kurahashi was also the chief secretary of Saikokai, the ceramics study group established in 1914 and centred around people from Tokyo University. He presided over Kôseikai, a publishing house attached to Saikokai, and he published many essays and lectures including Yanagi's *Zakki-no Bi* and *Shoki Ôtsu-e* and writings by Aoyama Jirô, Ishimaru Shigeharu and others.

The intellectuals also included people such as Nojima Yasuzô, one of the most distinguished photographers in modern Japan, who ran an art gallery called Kabuto-ya and regularly held exhibitions for Tomimoto at the gallery or at his own house. These men helped each other: organising exhibitions, publishing catalogues and promoting the works of their friends, the rebellious young craft artists. Yanagi's letter to his old friend the writer Shiga Naoya asking for some work for Kobayashi Hideo, Aoyama's friend, reveals part of the mutual support within the group.[57]

This loose group of upper-middle-class urban intellectuals shared similar interests in literature, art, and modern

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56. See Appendix 2 for Kurahashi Tôjirô.
57. Letter to Shiga, *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.21-I, p.310.

craft.[58] Bernard Leach was another important link between them: they held a series of exhibitions of Leach's works even in the absence of the artist. Yanagi undoubtedly played a significant role in organising these exhibitions.[59] It is likely that the immediate circle around Yanagi received his 'Beauty of Crafts' as good literature and not much more. The reason for this assumption is twofold: first of all, they knew Yanagi as his personal friends in the same circle; secondly, they had a wide knowledge of various new theories in art and craft, both in Japan and the West, enabling them to put Yanagi's argument in a wider context.

In addition to the circle of intellectuals in Tokyo and Kyoto, there were also intellectuals in regional cities. They were people who had subscribed to *Shirakaba* as young students, and who always tried to keep up with the cultural and artistic developments in the major cities.

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58. A comparison of the numbers of intellectuals shows that in 1925 the number of university students in Japan was 46,685, or eight in every ten thousand, compared to 160 in every ten thousand in 1987 (*Nihon-no Rekishi: Futatsu-no Taisen*, Shôgakukan, 1993, p.151). One may argue that the small size of the cultural elite allowed each individual a larger potential influence over the general cultural direction.
59. For example, one letter to Leach says (original in English):

> After a consultation with Hamada, Tomy [Tomimoto], Tanaka & Nojima we decided to hold your exhibition in the newly furnished gallery of Kyûkyodô in the centre of Ginza street... Half of the exhibits were sold... Your exhibition means no trouble for us at all. It was done and will be done not by your request, but rather by our pleasant own will. Nearly all of your friends in Tokyo who know you personally or by name came to see your new works (Dated 2nd November 1925, *Zenshû*, vol.21-I, pp.612-13).

An example is Yoshida Shôtarô of Niigata Prefecture, whose efforts in publishing Yanagi's 'Getemono-no Bi' were mentioned above. But once Yanagi published his text - which amounted to a religious manifesto for the group - his influence reached well beyond this immediate circle. This contributed to changes in the direction of the movement.

The 'discovery of the beauty of craft' was particularly significant for Yanagi in that it brought together all of his preceding intellectual inquiries: his quest for spiritual truth, his aesthetic perception, then the discovery of the woodcarvings of Mokujiki Shônin and the beauty of ordinary craft objects. These activities, which at the first glance seem to be unrelated, were all brought together in Yanagi's religious aesthetics.[60] Now Yanagi began to look beyond the proposed establishment of a folk craft museum. He wanted to try out his ideas for an environment for producing good craft.

The idea of the craft cooperative

In February 1927, almost simultaneously with the revising of 'Getemono-no Bi', Yanagi drew up a proposal for a craft cooperative. A small number of copies of the proposal were printed and circulated among close friends and acquaintances. It was his solution to the inevitable

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60. For an attempt to analyse Yanagi's interest in beauty from the religious standpoint, see Ama Toshimaro, *Yanagi Muneyoshi: Bi-no Bosatsu*, Riburopôto, Tokyo, 1987.

question, 'What do we do now?'. He was well aware that the social conditions which had produced the kind of craft he admired had gone. It was impossible to return to the past. He thought that the craft of the future, if it were to maintain the beauty of folk craft, had to be led by leaders who could discern what was beautiful in an object. At the same time, the work had to be free from the contrivance of the individual. Yanagi's candid expression of his intentions is found in a private letter from Yanagi to Yoshida Shôtarô, in reply to the latter's questions:

> I want to emphasise the need for a system. In this regard, my point is the same as socialism. Under present-day capitalism, craft is dying all the time. That is why I seek the establishment of a cooperative. It is impossible for an individual to resist evil. The problems of craft are problems of society, not individuals. I believe that the beauty of craft is the beauty of society. And because it is becoming restricted to the beauty of the individual, I feel the need for this proposal. I can understand why Ruskin and Morris became socialists, and I feel deeply for them.[61]

Clearly, the inspiration for a cooperative came from Ruskin's and Morris' ideas and experiments. Yanagi might have known of the Vienna Workshop, but so far no evidence has been found that he did.[62] In response to Yanagi's proposal, two young craft artists, Aota Gorô (1898-1935) and Kuroda Tatsuaki (1904-1982), set up a workshop at

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61. Yanagi's letter to Yoshida Shôtarô, *Zenshû*, vol.21-I, p.320.
62. Ueno Isaburô (1892-1951), an architect, returned to Japan in 1925 after some years in Berlin and at the Wiener Werkstätte. Yasuda Rokuzô had also studied at the Werkstätte, in 1915, and become a major force in the establishment of the Imperial Craft Society in 1926 (*Japanese Aesthetics and Sense of Space: Another Aspect of Modern Japanese Design*, Exhibition catalogue, Saizon Museum of Art, 1990, pp.273-7).

Kamigamo, Kyoto, with support from the group. The two, and others who joined the workshop later, produced many pieces for Mikuni-sô, a model house decorated in the Mingei style and exhibited at the 1928 Great Domestic Exhibition at Ueno Park, commemorating the enthronement of Emperor Hirohito. But the cooperative failed and closed in 1929 (see Chapter Six).

In 1929 Yanagi was invited to work at the Fogg Museum, Massachusetts, for a year. He took the opportunity to go to London with Hamada to visit Leach before going to the USA. In London, he admired the Victoria and Albert Museum and other museums. He also wrote to Jugaku: 'There are so many old books I want. It takes a lot of effort to restrain myself. There are plenty of *getemono* too, which frustrates me.'[63] While staying in London, he also flew to Paris with Leach, Hamada and Henry Burgen. This trip to Paris also took him to Chartres to see the cathedral. Before leaving for the USA, Yanagi travelled to northern Europe with Hamada and Shikiba Ryûzaburo.[64] He described his impression of folk art museums in Sweden in his letter to Leach (original in English):

> [The first part of the letter missing] the most marvellous is its museums, especially 'Nordiska Museet' - Northern Museum together with Skansen. It is the biggest museum of peasant arts in the world. In more than a hundred rooms things are full. It is said that this was done by the untiring labour of Dr. Hazelius who died about 30 years ago, when one could understand him. But it is now a national museum, the very one Sweden is boast of to the world... Yes, nothing of peasant work is ugly in that museum,

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63. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.21-I, p.367.
64. See appendix 2 for Shikiba Ryûzaburô.

> except the things of high-class people. All sorts of volkarts have been collected from Sweden, Finland, Norway, Denmark & so on, together with the cottages and rooms and even people both male & female who wear their own country-costumes which are very beautiful. It is really an ideal Museum of peasant arts, though somewhat different from what I wish to have.[65]

Perhaps in Yanagi's mind, Dr Hazelius and his collection represented a challenge for him to create a Japanese version of a quality museum.

The magazine *Kôgei*

Shortly after his return to Japan in July 1930, Yanagi drew up a prospectus for the magazine *Burêku-to Hoittoman* (Blake and Whitman) with Jugaku Bunshô. He also became involved in discussions for the publication of a magazine to introduce folk crafts to a wider public. Yanagi recalled the circumstances of the publication in the *Hensanroku* (Editor's Notes and Correspondence section) of volume twelve of *Kôgei*:

> The circumstances eventually demanded that we publish an independent craft magazine, because we realised that the area of craft towards which our mind was drawn was vastly different from what was generally accepted. An attempt to publish a magazine which was not likely to sell, was an economic risk. So it was discussed that each of us contribute some money and publish a regular publication for small circulation. I discussed the matter with Kawai, Hamada, Aoyama Jirô, Ishimaru Shigeharu and others. Apparently the others came very close to publishing it under Aoyama's initiative while I was overseas, but the plan had fallen through. Our passion revived on my return. Aoyama drew a meticulous plan. Incidentally we met Akiba of Jugakusha [the publisher], and decided on the publication. The title was originally decided as *Mingei*, but was later changed to *Kôgei* on Aoyama's and others' insistence.[66]

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65. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.21-I, p.596.
66. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.20, p.122.

The last sentence, referring to the title of the magazine, inconspicuously reveals that a major disagreement already existed among the initial members. At that time, Yanagi was still in Kyoto (he moved to Tokyo in May 1933), working on the magazine on Blake and Whitman, so the main business of the publication of *Kôgei* was in the hands of Aoyama and Ishimaru in Tokyo. Yanagi and Hamada wanted *Mingei* as its title, while Aoyama and Ishimaru preferred *Kôgei*.[67] The distance between them may have contributed to the eventual breakdown of communication between Yanagi and the two editors in Tokyo, but a disagreement over a decision as important as the title of the magazine seems to have been rooted in a major difference in their respective attitudes towards folk craft.

At any rate, the prospectus was printed at some time early in December that year, in the name of Tomimoto, Kawai, Hamada, Ishimaru, Aoyama and Yanagi.[68] It sets out two major aims of the magazine: first, that the magazine would deal with craft, which had been neglected in the area of plastic art; second, the magazine would deal with folk craft as its major subject, as it was the kind of craft that retained craft's authentic character. To that end, it would show 'the standard of beauty which we understand

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67. In his letter to Hamada in November 1930, Yanagi wrote 'As you said, I intend to change the title to *Mingei*.' In late December, he wrote again, 'I heard that the title of the magazine was changed from *Mingei* to *Kôgei* again'(*Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.21-I, pp.404-7).
68. Yanagi's letter to Yoshida Shôtarô dated 5th December, *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.21-I, p.405.

to be correct', with as many images of objects as possible. The various essays in the magazine would, as a whole, offer an organically unified viewpoint. Lastly, the magazine would also be made as a piece of craft in its own right.

Each issue of the magazine was limited to 500 copies (this was soon increased to 600, then 800 and to 1000) and sold by subscription only, at one yen per copy. It was an expensive magazine. In comparison, another magazine on ceramics entitled *Chawan* (Teabowls), which started two months after *Kôgei*, was sold at thirty-one sen, less than a third of the price of *Kôgei*.[69]

The discord between the two groups deepened during the preparation of the first issue of *Kôgei*. In the end Yanagi, after consulting Hamada and encouraged by his support, took on the editing of the magazine single-

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69. *Chawan* was published by Ono Ken'ichirô (1888-1943), a journalist with a training in Japanese painting. Ono took part in the rising interest in ceramics in the 1920s, and later published the six-volume dictionary of ceramics in collaboration with Katô Tôkurô. The writers of *Chawan* varied, from scholars such as Okuda Seiichi to antique dealers and collectors like Aoyama Jirô, and they covered a wide range of ceramics-related subjects.

handedly.[70] Although the exact course of the conflict between Yanagi and Aoyama is not known, one may speculate that while both shared a love for folk craft, their approach differed. Aoyama had a wider interest in ceramics than Yanagi. Yanagi rejected many Chinese and Japanese ceramics which had been traditionally collected by connoisseurs, but Aoyama was not so exclusive in his approach.[71] It is not difficult to think that Aoyama wanted to keep a wider scope for craft in general (hence his insistence on the title) while Yanagi intended to devote the magazine to folk craft. Furthermore, Yanagi's intention was to enlighten people with the beauty of folk craft. In contrast, both Aoyama and Ishimaru were

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70. Yanagi writes in his letters to Hamada in January 1931 [dated 2nd Jan]: 'Mr Kurahashi wrote to me harshly accusing me of my ways concerning the magazine... He says that it was because of my despotic ways that Ishimaru and Aoyama are quickly losing their interest... After consulting with Kawai, I decided not to intrude at all, leaving every decision to Aoyama and Ishimaru, and only send articles as a loyal contributor. I wrote to Kurahashi about it... Mr Kurahashi suggested that perhaps I should speak directly to Akiba and do the work alone in Kyoto. His cold words hurt me... I was originally interested in the fact that we would be working together.' [16th Jan]: 'Your last letter considerably brightened me.' [21st Jan] 'Akiba just informed me in his letter that Ishimaru resigned his position as an editor. Since Mr Kurahashi's letter, things had got very complicated, and I regret that we have ended like this. I also blame irrationality on my part. But, now that we have come to this point, I have decided to take the responsibility of developing this work, so rest assured... I would like all of them - Aoyama, Ishimaru and Kurahashi - to contribute to the magazine.' (*Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.21-I, pp.408-10.)
71. For example, in 1927 he was asked to catalogue over 2000 pieces of Chinese ceramics collected by a businessman. The result was published as *Ôkôfu* in 1931 by Kurahashi's Kôseikai in 1931.

discreet about stating their opinions on beauty, let alone discussing it in an ethical context. In fact, Ishimaru wrote in the first issue of *Kôgei*:

> It seems that enough has been said about the beauty of *getemono* and the Way of Craft. From now, I think, we need to sort out the facts around physical objects. Perhaps this will turn out to be a sure and strong method for us.[72]

Aoyama also expressed his feelings in the fourth issue of the magazine, in a short article provocatively titled *Yabuhebi-ki*.[73]

> In *Chawan* no.2... Mr Miyazaki Jôji... quotes Mr Takamura Kôtarô's words: 'I know that there are many very good pieces in folk craft, but I deliberately pretend that I don't notice them. If you put them in places like this (pointing to the alcove) and start talking about how beautiful they are, you will spoil them.' Some distinguished people should write these words on paper and stick it on the forehead. Perhaps one of them may begin to see his own image in the mirror. These few words are a revelation in a hundred years for the craft world.[74]

Takamura Kôtarô's words represent a reaction to Yanagi's writings and beliefs at the time by some major artists and craft artists. But Yanagi sidestepped Aoyama's provocation. In the editor's note, having taken the cases of Ibsen and Whitman as examples of collecting criticisms and successfully publishing them, he continues: 'Lately, I myself have become fortunate enough to be criticised. I am thinking about extending my collecting habit to these

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72. *Kôgei*, no.1, p.45.
73. '*Yabuhebi*' is a short version of a proverb 'Yabu-o tataite hebi-o dasu' (Hitting the bush and letting out the snake), meaning 'an unnecessary act brings about an unexpected and harmful result.' *Ki* here means 'note'.
74. *Kôgei*, no.4, pp.44-5.

criticisms to amuse people in later years.'[75]

In answer to that, Aoyama, in his article 'What is Criticism?', tried to make the point that his earlier comments were more fundamental than what Yanagi called 'criticism'.[76] Yanagi ignored this, however. Instead, he criticised Aoyama indirectly by refuting an article by Koito Gentarô which Aoyama had praised.[77] Aoyama gave one parting comment in the January 1932 issue of the magazine:

> The first-class Korean [ceramic piece] is one in a million. A man may encounter one in his whole life. It cannot be described in words or in photographs. Others do not understand. It is mine and mine only. This is what can be called the secret of the antique... The Korean ceramics are beautiful not because they are ordinary wares, but because they are [aesthetically] weak.[78]

With this passage, Aoyama made it clear that he was a critical connoisseur of ordinary wares, and had no intention of being a 'missionary' of Yanagi's teachings.

So, at this point the difference of opinions within the initial group which started the magazine had become clear.

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75. Yanagi goes even further and writes a verse:
> To be loved by someone you despise, how unbearable it would be; To be disliked by someone you despise, how convenient it would be; To be disliked by someone you respect, how unfortunate it would be; To be loved by someone you respect, how fortunate it would be (*Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.20, p.72).

76. *Kôgei*, no.7, p.34.
77. Koito claimed that good patterns on cheap, local craft were originally drawn by artists (*Kôgei*, no.7, p.46). Aoyama was not as familiar with, or interested in, the actual process of production, as Yanagi who had both interest and the support of Hamada's and Kawai's expertise. See, for example, Shirasaki Hideo, *Kitaôji Rosanjin*, vol.1, p.73.
78. *Kôgei*, no.13, pp.111-12.

And it was Yanagi who, supported by his other friends Hamada and Kawai, took the reins of the movement.

4-2. The second phase: 1931 to 1934

The magazine *Kôgei* thus started under Yanagi's strong influence. The period from the start of the magazine to the formation of the *Nippon Mingei Kyôkai* (Japan Mingei Association) in 1934 was a period when the movement was searching for its direction. It was also the time when the 'New Mingei' movement started in various locations.

Active discussions and exchanges of ideas took place at *zadankai* organised by the magazine, and they were reported in it (see Appendix 5 for the list of the *zadankai*). Most of the *zadankai* were concentrated in the years 1933 and 1934, nine of them before the establishment of the Japan Mingei Association, and three after.[79] The fact that the topical discussions on the problems of craft and society took place at the monthly meetings among the core members of the Mingei group indicates that the group, particularly Yanagi, was still uncertain about the future direction of the movement.

The fourth and the last *Kôgei* Readers' Zadankai, held almost four years after the previous one, was not an occasion for discussion. According to Mizutani, the talks

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79. The regular monthly meeting at Yanagi's house, now in Tokyo, may have continued, but no reference to them can be found in *Kôgei*.

were all about the recent trip to Korea by Yanagi, Kawai and Hamada. It is reasonable to think, therefore, that the discussion within the movement on various issues concerning folk craft and the direction of the movement practically ceased after 1934. Tomimoto's name, too, disappears from the magazine, following Ishimaru's departure earlier. This does not mean, however, that no one differed from Yanagi's opinions. Perhaps the most important man among those who took a different stand from Yanagi's was Mizutani Ryôichi (1901-1959), one of the few people for whose opinion Yanagi had a special respect. Mizutani was present at all of the *zadankai* except the first (details of the second *zadankai* are not available) and also acted as a recorder of the discussions.

The First *Kôgei* Readers' Zadankai, according to a very brief account in *Kôgei*, was a mish-mash of various opinions on craft and folk craft.[80]

The Second *Kôgei* Readers' Zadankai again attracted people of various professions. Tomimoto spelled out the dilemma he was facing: that his wish to produce good craft at low prices and in large quantity, could not be solved by himself alone and that he had ended up producing rare objects for the pleasure of a few rich people. There was

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80. According to the record, the main contents of the *zadankai* were: Hamada's talk on English folk glaze; Yanagi's report on the folk museums in Europe and America; Kurahashi's talk on the future of *mingei*; Tanikawa Tetsuzô's discussion on 'Is Craft Art?'; and a lively debate over the value of art criticism between Aoyama Jirô and his older brother Tamikichi.

also a discussion on the seemingly contradictory nature of the Mingei group, namely Yanagi's teaching that beauty flourished most in cheap *getemono*, against the fact that the craft artists of the movement were producers of luxury objects and that the magazine itself was a luxurious *jôtemo-no*. Itô Shun'ichi, a lawyer, asked Yanagi if he intended to make *Kôgei* his personal magazine, to which Yanagi answered that he had no intention of doing so.

In the record of the Third Readers' Zadankai, the emergence of a group which later came to change the direction of the movement can be observed. Its leader Yoshida Shôya was not present at the *zadankai*, but he was represented by Yamamoto Tetsutarô, the manager of Takumi, the first New Mingei shop, which Yoshida had opened seventeen months earlier. Yoshida had revived some local crafts and started the shop as an outlet for them. Like his friend Shikiba Ryûzaburô, Yoshida was a faithful disciple of Yanagi's 'teaching', as it were, and he often clashed with the earlier, or 'connoisseur' group.[81] Yamamoto confidently reported that the shop was very successful, making a profit at a time of economic downturn.

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81. Some of these occasions were: with Ishimaru on the quality of the New Mingei (*Kôgei*, no. 12 & 15); with Mizutani (see Yanagi, *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû* vol.20-I, pp.400-1); and with Jugaku (Yoshida, *Mingei* March & May issues, 1961, and Jugaku, 'Mingei Undô-no Himitsu' and 'Watashi-no Mingei Kyôshitsu', *Yanagi Sôetsu-to Tomoni*, pp.62-74). Aoyama expressed his contempt for Shikaba Ryûzaburô and Yoshida (*Kôgei*, no.26, p.63 and 'Aoyama Jirô Diary', p.109).

The original group, on the other hand, was represented by Tomimoto and Ishimaru. Tomimoto spoke of the state of craft at Teiten and urged younger scholars such as Ishimaru to consider a practical theory of craft. Ishimaru raised the question of the relationship between craft and life:

> I have been seeking for the meaning of the relationship with craft and life, as Mr Tomimoto mentioned, not life among friends but in a general sense... Young people today are not interested in revivalistic craft... This state of things is not good for our interest, but from the viewpoint of craft, something has to be done. Unless we solve this problem, we will keep going round in a circle. We cannot separate the [problem of the] beauty of craft and life, but we need both people who consider them together and people who consider them separately. Until now, I do not think we have thought of them separately enough. Today, beauty is not a major concern of our life. We must think of them separately.[82]

Ishimaru's comments, though not clearly reported (the recorder of this *zadankai* was Shikiba Ryûzaburô), can be interpreted as a warning against the Mingei movement losing touch with the general art and craft world and becoming a close circle of Yanagi's faithful followers.

The records of the following topical *zadankai* reveal the struggle within the group in searching for a direction for the movement. According to Mizutani, the idea of regular meetings on the third Sunday of the month at Yanagi's house 'emerged among us and became established'. Following is a list of the people who attended more than one of *zadankai* nos. 5-12 (the preliminary meeting is

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82. *Kôgei*, no.35, pp.62-63.

indicated by 'p'):

Yanagi Sôetsu (all)

Mizutani Ryôichi(all)

Mori Kazuki (p, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11)[83]

Tomimoto Kenkichi (p, 5, 6, 7, 8)

Asano Chôryô (p, 5, 9, 11)

Ishimaru Shigeharu (p, 5, 6)

Koide Tsuguo (7, 8, 12)[84]

Hamada Shôji (6, 9, 10)

Serizawa Keisuke (9, 10, 12)

Shikiba Ryûzaburô (6, 7)

Kawai Kanjirô (p, 12)

It is clear that Yanagi and Mizutani kept the intellectual enquiry going for a little longer after Ishimaru and Tomimoto bowed out of the scene.

The '*zadankai* on pattern' showed the gap between Yanagi's idealistic vision of 'enlightened craft artists leading the artisans' and the practical problems which Tomimoto faced during his attempts in trying to do just that. Tomimoto shared his bitter experience arising from the lack of copyright for craft designs on the one hand, and the difficulties of working with artisan-workers on the other. Yanagi could not offer any suggestions to him, and only repeated his ideals:

At any rate, the future craft artists (*kojin sakka*)

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83. Mori Kazuki was Mizutani's colleague at the Department of Commerce and Industry. Although he frequently attended *zadankai*, he made little contribution to the discussion.
84. See appendix 2 for Koide Tsuguo.

> must find ways of developing their own work among the mass-produced objects made by others, as well as creating their own.

In reality, however, none of the craft artists of the movement to date committed themselves to working with artisans/workers, despite the fact that some of them tried it personally or within an institution. Too often, however, they repeated Tomimoto's bitter experience and returned to pursue their own work.[85]

How Yanagi recognised the problems concerning the immediate objectives of the movement can be observed in the series of two *zadankai*, Beauty and Its Social Character. Having established a concept of correct beauty, Yanagi said, the problem was how to produce beautiful objects. It was also important to produce beautiful objects in large quantities. To this end, he thought, it was more effective to improve the beauty of craft rather than to try to change art. One way of spreading beauty in society through craft was to advocate it through writing. But the writing alone would not be enough: it had to be complemented by a real increase in the number of beautiful objects. This would be difficult if one relied on the few artist craftsmen to carry out the task. The products must be made in large quantities, either by hand or by machine.

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85. See Chapter Six. In the second *zadankai* with Leach, Hamada declared that he had decided to develop a cooperative system to instruct potters around Mashiko. This was never accomplished.

Koide, a protégé of the philosopher Nishida Kitarô, challenged Yanagi's perception of the issue by presenting another view of the problem: it could be dangerous to perceive the problem of beauty only from the viewpoint of the magazine *Kôgei*, which stood for the petty bourgeoisie, because a solution coming from one social class might be harmful to others. He thus indirectly warned against the tendency of the privileged urban elites which preferred to preserve the 'old and quaint' products while they may be causing the 'backwardness' of the people who actually use them. He further argued that it would be wrong to seek a standard of beauty only in family-oriented pre-modern products. For example, while a good weight in a utensil had been important in the past because it represented a spiritual calmness, modern society would seek lighter and brighter products. Koide's point was that one should aim to design products which would meet the demand of the new social environment and which were still beautiful in their own right. His conclusion was: 'the craft artist must become an innovator. He must take a new approach to the creation of the new.' Tomimoto agreed with Koide saying that a conscious artist would have to enter a large organisation and cooperate with capitalists.[86]

Yanagi and Mizutani invited Ôkuma Nobuyuki to a *zadankai* on craft and economy, some months after the formation of

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86. Tomimoto actually did this on a limited scale. Although not to the extent of so-called 'designer products', some of his designs were mechanically produced under the brand name Tomihana. Such an attempt was extremely rare for a ceramicist.

the Japan Mingei Association. It was clearly an attempt to seek theoretical support for Yanagi's argument on production of craft. The attempt failed, however. Ôkuma was an economist who had been inspired by Yanagi's 'Kôgei-no Michi'. It seems that he could not respond to Yanagi's request for support precisely because Yanagi's writing which inspired him, did so because of the lack of ethics in the cold science of economics. In addition, he was very careful not to overstep the border of his expertise and express opinions for which he could not be responsible as an economist. As a result, the *zadankai* only made it clear that any attempt to combine economics and aesthetics would go no further than Ruskin and Morris who, in Ôkuma's words, 'raised the question but failed to offer any solution'.[87]

The last of the series of *zadankai* was on 'craft and life'. By then, it was evident that Yanagi had become increasingly defensive about issues which would divert his focus away from the perception of beauty. Furthermore, beauty for him was that which already existed. He took a conservative stand against others' suggestions that new kinds of beauty might be possible. On the other hand, the other party, which confronted Yanagi for lacking a view of the social reality, could not offer a realistic solution either. As Kawai put it, 'Every time we get together, we have two opposing parties.'[88] The discussions thus failed

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87. *Kôgei*, no.45, pp.76-77.
88. *Kôgei*, no.48, p.58.

to produce any positive direction for the movement.

In the meantime, the outer circle, the group of people who found 'salvation by faith' in Yanagi's writings, had gone ahead to organise the revival of local crafts in different locations. Following the first publication of *Kôgei* in 1931, the Tottori Mingei Promotion Society (April 1931), the Shizuoka Folk Craft Association (April 1932), the Shimane Mingei Association (May 1932) and the Yasugi Mingei Association (July 1932) were established. For them, Yanagi's teaching was beyond question. What Jugaku described as 'incomplete truth' was accepted as truth, and the situation made Yanagi responsible for them.

4-3. The third phase: 1934-1940s

Kôgei no.42 (June 1934) announced the establishment of the Japan Mingei Associtation:

> 'The Establishment of the Japan Mingei Association'
>
> This was also on our agenda for a long time... We have already planned to build a 'Mingei Gallery', we publish the magazine *Kôgei* monthly, organise various exhibitions every year, and have established some local associations which are quickly increasing their production. As the necessary result, our craft shop Takumi opened in Tokyo. Fortunately, each work has grown successfully and quickly, thanks to the efforts of our close friends. A new desire emerged, however, to create an organisation to control our various activities and make them an organic whole.[89]

As Mizuo points out, the association's main function was to be the point of contact and exchange for the growing

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89. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.16, p.362.

local 'New Mingei production centres and their outlet, Takumi'.[90]

If connoisseurship and education were the main aims of the movement, there was no need for such an association. Publication of an epoch-making magazine, organising exhibitions which were enlightening to many, and planning of a gallery, were also activities in which the *Shirakaba* group had involved themselves. Yet that group would never have thought of establishing a *Shirakaba* Association. The establishment of Yanagi's association signalled a decisive turning-point for the Mingei Movement, as the emphasis shifted from connoisseur-oriented appreciation to a production-oriented, quasi-religious movement.

The transition to the new phase is not very apparent in the outlook of the magazine *Kôgei*. A general dwindling of the range of the writers can be observed, but the magazine continued to include research into various local crafts and their historical and aesthetic analysis. The activities of local organisations are mentioned in the 'Editor's Notes and Correspondence' section of the magazine. The next significant step was the publication of the *Gekkan Mingei* (Mingei Monthly), begun in April 1939. The editor of the magazine was Shikiba Ryûzaburô. Shikiba was a close friend of Yoshida Shôya, who was a military doctor in service in northern China at the time, and both were activists in the movement in different

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90. Mizuo, *Hyôden Yanagi Sôetsu*, p.195.

capacities. Shikiba, a psychiatrist, stayed around Yanagi and the *Shirakaba* group and contributed mainly through compilation and editing: he compiled bibliographies of Bernard Leach and other craft artists relating to the Mingei Movement. He translated the letters of Van Gogh. When Yanagi travelled to England and America in 1929, Shikiba joined Yanagi and Hamada in England and travelled to Europe with them.

4-4. Yoshida Shôya and the New Mingei movement

Yoshida Shôya (1898-1972) was born in Tottori as the first son of a medical doctor. Between 1917 and 1921 he went to the medical school in Niigata Prefecture, where he met Shikiba Ryûzaburô through a literary activity.[91] They were ardent fans of *Shirakaba*. The two young men visited Yanagi in Abiko in 1920. Yoshida became an ear, nose and throat doctor. Soon after his graduation, he volunteered for military service. From then on, he worked at various hospitals around Japan as well as engaging himself in military service.

Yoshida's return to Tottori in late 1930 and his opening of a clinic in 1931 coincided with the first publication

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91. For Yoshida's biographical details, I referred to his CV prepared by the Tottori Folk Craft Association, Sakamoto Akemi, 'Yoshida Shôya-to Mingei Undô' (a diploma thesis in Education, Tottori University, 1990); and Suzuki Minoru, *Sendachi Hachinin-no Ashioto: Tottori Meiyo Shimin Shinobugusa*, Itô Shuppan Jimusho, Tottori, 1982. pp.183-199. I am grateful to Mrs Yuasa Junko, the manager of Takumi, for providing me with some of the above material.

of *Kôgei*. An admirer of Yanagi and his writings on folk crafts, Yoshida collected local crafts for some time when, on his return to Tottori, a group of earthenware bowls in a local shop attracted his attention. He found out that the bowls were fired at Ushinoto, some 17 kilometres south of Tottori City. Yoshida visited the kiln, which was run by the only potter family in the village, and soon he decided to revive the kiln by selecting some traditional designs or creating new designs to match the modern lifestyle. Yoshida expanded the scheme to include textiles, woodwork and other crafts in the region. His aim was to put Yanagi's theory into practice: to create a New Mingei which would preserve the best of tradition but also produce items that would respond to contemporary demands. He raised funds to provide the necessary capital and soon opened a shop, Takumi (workmanship), in Tottori. To create demand for the New Mingei, he organised the Tottori Mingei Promotion Society to spread Yanagi's ideas on mingei and promote the products of his workmen.

Yoshida's perception of the Mingei Movement was shared by many others - the second generation Mingei group, as it were - many of whom were also engaged in similar revivals of mingei. It was this new generation that the *Mingei Monthly* was published to serve. Yoshida's view of the movement can be observed in an article which he sent from northern China and published in the *Mingei Monthly*.

> The Mingei Movement is a social reform movement based on beauty... The origin of the Mingei Movement is traced to the writing 'Kôgei-no Michi' (The Way of

> Craft) by Master Yanagi Sôetsu... Later emerged some craft artists who agreed with the view of Mingei and who attempted to acquire the truth of the healthy beauty of ordinary crafts and to recreate it in their work. Next, the Japan Folk Craft Association was established and the magazine *Kôgei* was published, and the movement began to take shape... The future of the Mingei Movement will be centred around Takumi. The [New] Mingei will not grow unless the products are collected and sold to create a circulation. The main reason why the old Mingei is disappearing is because it has no demand. To avoid that, Takumi must be a good wholesaler and support production.[92]

This view, to look up to Yanagi as the single source of inspiration and see the aim of the movement as a kind of spiritual liberation, has since been held by most Mingei activists as the ideal and the history of the movement. The religious implications of Yanagi's arguments were accepted and reinforced by some influential Christian members such as Tonomura Kichinosuke (weaver, 1898-1993), Muraoka Kageo and Yuasa Hachirô (entomologist and international peace activist, 1890-1981). This new group increased its influence within the movement after the formation of the Japan Mingei Association in 1934 and has continued up to the present (1990s).

After 1940, particularly after the war in the Pacific broke out, art and craft production was under the strictest government control, and a significant increase in the articles relating to the war effort is observable in the *Mingei Monthly*, though little change occurred in the choice of articles in *Kôgei*. A series of *zadankai* reported in the *Mingei Monthly* indicate the mounting

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92. 'Mingei Undô-ni Tsuite-no Watashi-no shinnen' (My Convictions on the Mingei Movement), *Mingei Monthly*, no.6, 1939, pp.20-21.

pressure of the new environment upon the movement. Both magazines suffered from the shortage of the material during and after the war, and the *Mingei Monthly* ended with its 70th issue in 1946.[93] The stoppage of the publication was due to an incident of a illegal appropriation of the paper ration.[94]

Aoyama's description of the history of the Folk Craft Movement, shown at the opening of this chapter, ended when the 'curtain was dropped'. That is, as far as Aoyama was concerned. The official history of the movement written by members of the movement, on the other hand, begins when Aoyama, Ishimaru and Tomimoto, fully half of the original members, dissociated themselves from the movement. Consequently, the official history has so far failed to explain why the three men joined the movement in the first place, or why they left. These questions will be explored in the following chapters.

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93. The title *Mingei Monthly* was changed to *Mingei* from no.33, but I refer to the later issues by the same title for clarity. Some of the issues were combined, and, according to Mizuo Hiroshi, *Mingei Monthly* no.69 was not published, and the original script is missing (Mizuo Hiroshi, *General Catalogue of* Kôgei *and* Mingei, p.22.)
94. Mizuo, *General Catalogue of* Kôgei *and Mingei Monthly*, p.23. According to Okamura Kichiemon, Shikiba was accused of the misappropriation and Yanagi banished him. (Personal contact made on 24 May 1993)

CHAPTER FIVE

Criticisms and Problems of the Mingei Movement

From the start, the Mingei movement contained contradictions within itself. The original core members shared an admiration for the beauty of some ordinary crafts and they united their efforts in promoting it. But their unity stopped there. One may assume that the 'connoisseurs' like Aoyama envisaged the movement as a means of promoting ordinary crafts as part of a wider appreciation of craft. It can also be assumed that Tomimoto saw in the movement a means of overcoming the problems he faced in developing his personal ideal, that is, the production of beautiful crafts which were accessible to the public.

But their voices were overwhelmed by a new development within the movement, namely the New Mingei movement. This was inspired exclusively by Yanagi's aesthetic, which had little significance for the original members. After half the original members had left the movement, Mizutani Ryôichi kept their critical aesthetic alive within it only by fostering creative younger craft artists.

As an aesthetic movement, the Mingei movement had two major problems: one was related to Yanagi's 'formula' (as

Hamada put it) stating the characteristics of folk craft; and the other, partly a result of the first, was the lack of a practical theory for the future direction of the movement. Simply put, the original Mingei group was critical of Yanagi's 'formula', while the people of the New Mingei group were faithful followers of it. As to the question of direction, the first group supported the possibility of mechanical production while the later group preferred to revive handicraft and persisted in this course.

5-1. Criticisms of Yanagi's 'formula'

Hamada, Kawai and Tomimoto

A survey of the history of the pre-war Mingei movement shows that Yanagi's 'formula' was the thesis in which he synthesised all his previous studies on art, philosophy and religion.[1] It was the conclusion of his search for truth.[2] As soon as it was published, however, it was treated as a practical manual for craft appreciation.

Two comments by Hamada Shôji and Kawai Kanjirô on Yanagi's

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1. Some may argue that the synthesis of Yanagi's ideas was his Buddhist Aesthetic, the developed form of which was first expressed in a lecture entitled 'Bi-no Hômon' (The Buddhist Teachings of Beauty) in November 1948.
2. Incidentally, Yuasa Hachirô, one of Yanagi's faithful followers, quotes Keats' famous phrase from his *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' in referring to his own convition in an introductory handbook on Mingei (*Watashi-no Mingeidô-kan*, Kurashi Te-no Kai, Kyoto, 1980, p.13).

so-called 'Mingei theory', as recalled by Okamura Kichiemon, may serve as a starting-point for discussion:

> 'Mingei is Yanagi's creation, through his eyes. There's really no such thing [as Mingei]. Out of nothing, or perhaps because there was nothing, Yanagi created it and formulated it. It was a keen insight of Yanagi's.' (Kawai)
>
> 'Mingei is the left-overs from Yanagi's meal, as it were. All the best parts have been taken by Yanagi. Others look at the left-overs and fuss over it as the Mingei.' (Hamada)[3]

These comments were made after the Pacific War. By then, the Mingei movement had been widely identified with the New Mingei and the promoting of Yanagi's Mingei theory. Both Kawai and Hamada sharply pointed out the gap between Yanagi's personal aesthetic and the popular movement which started from Yanagi's formula. These comments, which are helpful in putting Yanagi's ideas in a realistic perspective, remained unpublished until Okamura Kichiemon's book came out in 1991. But there is one small passage in the first issue of *Kôgei* which shows Hamada's caution over Yanagi's formula:

> No matter how good *getemono* is, one cannot always serve Western tea in the noodle cup, or serve Western cakes on a horse-eye plate. Worse still, if this becomes a concept and becomes formulated, we will be laughed at. Beauty cannot be grasped through a formula.[4]

In a later interview with Bernard Leach, Hamada also expressed his opinion on Yanagi's theory with a freedom which he never showed in his books written in Japanese:

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3. Okamura Kichiemon, *Yanagi Sôetsu-to Shoki Mingei Undô*, p.40.
4. *Kôgei*, no.1, p.29.

> [original in English] Yanagi, because the concept of mingei was new, had to make a collection. He had to show all sorts of examples to bring forward a single point, a single conclusion, to allow people to use this conclusion as a standpoint. He had to use a formula for folk art to illustrate the point he was trying to make. But it was quite clear to Yanagi that this formula was not meant to be followed exactly in our time and age.
>
> When observing works of the past, it is good to have this standard that he set up; it is helpful to have a means with which to observe, to appreciate. But when it comes to producing, to creating for tomorrow, for those who are artists in need of producing, what is written and formulated about folk art is not enough. If this point is not understood, mingei of tomorrow cannot survive. I am saying that Yanagi knew this and yet he did go on with his thesis. The over-attachment to the formulation Yanagi made of folkcraft is what is causing the deterioration, the dying out of mingei these days.[5]

This passage is testimony to the independent spirit of Hamada, the potter who was always thought to be closest to Yanagi, and who appeared to have worked to realise Yanagi's ideal beauty as a '*mingei sakka*' [Mingei ceramicst]. Contrary to the general perception, the concept of the 'Three Masters of the Mingei movement' was, in reality, a myth. But unlike Tomimoto, Hamada and Kawai chose to stay with Yanagi in the movement, and accepted being seen as Yanagi's closest supporters, sometimes even as his followers.

Tomimoto, on the other hand, parted from the group when he saw where the movement was heading. He had been a founding member of the movement from its very conception in the 1920s, yet he appears to have left no record of his feelings when he signed the Prospectus of a Japan Folk Art

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5. Bernard Leach, *Hamada: potter*, pp.167-8.

Gallery along with the other five men. His well-known commitment to originality also makes it difficult to readily associate him with the Mingei movement. Two essays by Tomimoto may shed some light on his thoughts around this time.

'Richô-no Suiteki' (The Yi Dynasty [Choson] Water Dropper) was written in 1922 and published in the special issue of *Shirakaba* on Korean ceramics, obviously organised by Yanagi.[6] In the article Tomimoto describes the beauty of a small blue-and-white water dropper. He says that despite his usual caution he was prompted to write this short essay when he heard that someone had written in a magazine that Choson ceramics were a kind of degradation of pottery. He wrote the essay in defence of Choson ceramics, and dedicated it to Yanagi - at whom one can assume the earlier article was targeted.[7]

In the main text, Tomimoto describes the quiet and modest character of the water dropper's shape and pattern, and how some technical inadequacy and incompleteness did not impair its beauty - rather, it seemed even to enhance it:

> Its sturdy, near-cubic shape stands firmly on four simple legs. Serving both its function as a water dropper and its pleasant outlook, the shape deserves a perfect score. When I think of today's craft items, many of which either ignore their function or were made for the function only, without any character, the thought saddens me...
>
> I strongly believe that true art must spring from the life which surrounds it. When I reflect on the life

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6. *Shirakaba*, vol.13, no.9, 1922.
7. *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, pp.277-8.

> of the people of the Yi dynasty, I can almost see an image of a happy life in the poor and quiet Eastern region, with which I have begun to be acquainted in the last a few years... In our time and age, even a small water dropper of less than two inches in height strikes me with its inexplicable strength. And I ponder over the power and nobleness of art, which captures one with its eternal life, through a piece made by an insignificant potter a long time ago.[8]

Tomimoto's appreciation of ordinary wares had begun many years earlier, and it was not limited to Western or other exotic items.[9] He shared with Kawai a strong admiration for the beauty of folk crafts. Unlike Kawai, however, Tomimoto saw the old wares as enemies against which he had to compete with his own originality, and in 1920 destroyed most of his treasured old wares in a radical decision to eliminate their influence in his everyday work. His attitude was based on the recognition that the beauty of the folk crafts of the past could not be achieved in the modern age, and that the modern artist was destined to rely only on his own resources to continue the tradition and create beauty in the new context.

Because folk crafts had always been close to Tomimoto's heart, it was natural that he joined Yanagi, Hamada and Kawai in their crusade for the beauty of folk crafts to be recognised. In addition, by 1927, his confrontationist attitude towards *getemono* had become somewhat more

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8. *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, pp.275-7.
9. In 1913 he wrote to *Bijutsu Shinpô* that his friend Minami had been wrongly accused of painting a Delft ware bottle held by a Japanese boy. Tomimoto pointed out that the bottle was a cheap *sake* bottle used among the peasants, and claimed that critics should pay closer attention to people's art (*minkan geijutsu*) (vol.2, no.3, p.35).

positive. While still admitting that he could not accomplish what had been so effortlessly accomplished in the ordinary wares, he wrote:

> I ran out of pine wood for fuel. I shall use coal. If I run out of coal shortly, I shall use electricity... let us revive the *getemono* that are now buried in the soil, and bring them back into the human world. Let us not just enjoy them or reminisce about them as a thing of the past, but turn them into a power for the coming age, and let the new aeroplanes fly about overhead in our next age. I believe thus and proceed ahead...
>
> Nothing is more ludicrous and upsetting than to bring a few members of a dying race and let them sing at the city music hall, under the bright lights and in front of dressed-up men and women. Their songs should not be heard when sung nervously in such an odd place. I sincerely hope that *getemono* will not be treated like these people and their songs.[10]

To recognise the beauty of ordinary objects as a tradition and to develop a new kind of objects to replace them in the new age was Tomimoto's lifetime commitment. In this context, when discussing Tomimoto's participation in the early stages of the movement, it is important to note that the nature of the group in the 1920s was quite different from that of the 1930s.

A comparison of two passages by Yanagi corresponding to the two articles by Tomimoto suggests it was not quite that Tomimoto left Yanagi and his group, but rather that Yanagi left Tomimoto, discarding his original support. The first passage is from 'Tomimoto kun-no Tôki' (Tomimoto's pottery), published in the February issue of *Chûô Bijutsu* in 1922.

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10. 'Tôhenshû' (Collection of Pottery Fragments), *Tomimoto Kenkichi Chosakushû*, pp.360-1.

> Perhaps Tomimoto is the one and only Japanese potter who is proceeding along the main road towards beauty. Many others may surpass him in technique; there may be others who possess better knowledge. But as the rules of art tells us without fail, neither technique nor knowledge leads one to the main road to beauty. The depth of beauty always springs from an element that is essential to true art, and Tomimoto firmly possesses the element... His nature abhors compromise and following others... Most of the shapes and patterns of his pottery are original... [with his pottery] I never fail to experience the joy of an encounter with beauty that is created... A potter cannot deceive himself in his work. No beautiful vessel comes from a base mind. After all, the potter's heart is what comes out in all of his work... His work is protected by the beauty of his heart; his heart is protected by the beauty of nature. He is a pious believer in nature. A good potter has a faith in the power of nature.[11]

Here, Yanagi clearly states his full support for Tomimoto's attitudes: his commitment to originality and obedience to nature. But Yanagi's evaluation of Tomimoto's work had changed in 'Kôgei-no Michi', written in 1927:

> Let me present the case of Tomimoto, whom I respect, as an example of today's craft artist. He regards patterns as particularly important. He treats patterns, which were originally subordinate, independently: he published a collection of them. The patterns approach the spirit of *nanga* [literati painting], and I cannot help but feel that the beauty of their brushwork surpasses that of his ceramics.[12]

As Idekawa points out, here Yanagi is saying that while Tomimoto's brushwork is admirable as art, his ceramics are not good enough.[13] Yanagi uses this argument to support his claim that the works of craft artists are not *jun kôgei* (craft proper) but art, that because their works are

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11. *Chûô Bijutsu*, vol.8, no.2, Nihon Bijutsu Gakuin, 1922, Tokyo pp.88-91.
12. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol 8, p.166.
13. *Mingei: Riron-no Hôkai-to Yôshiki-no Tanjô*, p.234.

'craft art', they are *fujun kôgei* (impure craft), and that the beauty of 'craft art' is inferior to that of craft proper.[14] This is at best a challenge, and at worst an insult for Tomimoto, who always insisted that the pattern was inseparable from the three-dimensional shape of ceramics. Did Tomimoto's work fail to meet Yanagi's earlier expectations? Or did Yanagi change his aesthetic evaluation of Tomimoto's work after he discovered the beauty of ordinary wares and decided that a craft work should not show the individuality of the maker? It seems that the latter is more probable. In the second passage Yanagi does not specify his judgement on Tomimoto's work in terms of change in style, and no radical change in Tomimoto's work can be observed between 1921 and 1927. As Idekawa points out, Yanagi perhaps thought that publishing a collection of his original patterns was an ostentatious act of self-assertion which the potter should strive to eliminate.[15]

If this was the case, Yanagi was unfairly and unnecessarily writing off Tomimoto's work now that he had 'discovered' the formula, while not admitting that his own views had changed. Furthermore, the change seems to have been based more on dogmatic than aesthetic foundations. The two passages quoted above show that in five years Yanagi's appreciation of Tomimoto's work changed from a happy encounter with quality works of art to cautiously

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14. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol 8, p.166.
15. *Mingei: Riron-no Hôkai-to Yôshiki-no Tanjô*, p.234.

worded disapproval, reminiscent of a politician who has to check his public speech against the party policy.

Some Mingei writers claim that Tomimoto was wrong to accuse Yanagi of insisting that folk craft was the only correct form of craft and that individuality in craft was to be despised.[16] It is true that Yanagi always recognised the value of art as individual expression in his writings. On the other hand, it is also true that after he established the formula, art never regained the same status in his writings as it had held during the *Shirakaba* era (1910-1923).

Tomimoto's hostility towards Yanagi's group grew when Yanagi began to admit New Craft into the Kokugakai exhibition in the 1930s.[17] Tomimoto was invited to exhibit his ceramics at the Kokugakai exhibition in April 1927, when Kokugakai had no craft section. He was then offered a membership of the society, and he worked towards the establishment of a craft section in the following year, inviting entries from the public. There were original selectors for the section, including Tomimoto.

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16. For example Mizuo Hiroshi, writing on Tomimoto and his ceramics, claims that while Yanagi duly valued Tomimoto's work and its significance Tomimoto 'misunderstood' Yanagi and became critical of the Mingei group, and reacted emotionally against Kawai's (and Hamada's) attitude of actively learning from old works (*Gendai Nihon-no Tôgei*, vol.2, Kôdansha, 1976, pp.170-71).
17. I am grateful to Mr Yamamoto Shigeo of the Tomimoto Kenkichi Memorial Museum, for drawing my attention to the material relating to the the row between Tomimoto and Yanagi.

In 1929 Leach and Hamada exhibited at Kokugakai. In November 1930, Umehara Takeshi, the Kokugakai painter who was instrumental in inviting Tomimoto, asked Yanagi and Kawai to join the hanging committee. Yanagi's letter to Hamada indicates that Hamada was already a selector by then, and that it was also Tomimoto's wish that Yanagi and Kawai should join Kokugakai.[18]

Once *Kôgei* began publication and the New Mingei movement spread in the early 1930s, however, Yanagi began to invite New Mingei craftworks to Kokugakai. As a result, the two opposing trends became apparent in the craft section:

> For example, in one section we see a magnificent highbrow white porcelain jar. In another, a straw-woven bag and a casual everyday kimono from Tottori are placed in a jumble, as if in the shop-front of Takumi. I admit, of course, that each of these works has its own charm and taste. But I cannot understand why these ordinary products are placed solemnly and pretentiously at an art exhibition. Some may say that they are there because they are good, or beautiful. But I feel offended to see them placed side by side with works by Mr Tomimoto or Mr Hamada.[19]

Apparently the craft section of Kokugakai was by then divided into two sub-sections. One was Tomimoto's, and the other the Mingei group's, until the Mingei group left Kokugakai with the opening of the Japan Folk Crafts Museum

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18. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.21-I, p.402.
19. Kimura Kazuichi, 'Kokuten-no Kôgei-o Miru', *Atorie*, vol.12, no.6, 1935, p.37. One of the critics who saw the craft section of Kokugakai earlier criticised Hamada's work as 'expensive *getemono*' (*Atorie*, vol.7, no.3, 1930, p.57). But this criticism was directed towards Hamada's style and not the artistic quality of his work.

in 1936.[20] In 1946 Umehara recalled the Mingei group, and this time Tomimoto left Kokugakai in protest. Together with the others who left with him, he formed the *Shinshô Bijutsu Kôgeikai* (New Design Art Craft Association) in 1947.

It is evident from the above that Tomimoto's criticism of the Mingei movement was directed towards its application in promoting the New Mingei, which practically denied Tomimoto's efforts and commitment, rather than the theoretical position of the formula or dislike of Kawai's and Hamada's styles. It may be recalled that between 1927 and 1934 - that is, from the time Yanagi began to express reservations about Tomimoto's ceramics until the formulation of the Folk Crafts Association - Tomimoto was still participating in *zadankai* organised by Yanagi's group and discussing the future directions of craft. To argue that Tomimoto misunderstood Yanagi's intentions, therefore, would be unfair for Tomimoto. It may also be added here that, like Tomimoto and Hamada, some prominent contemporary craft artists, such as Fujii Tatsukichi, Katô Tôkurô and Watanabe Soshû, were also of the opinion that admiring ordinary old wares and creating one's own craft work were two different matters which should not be confused.[21]

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20. This is not documented, but Mr Yamamoto Shigeo obtained the information from a craft artist who submitted his work to the exhibition at the time.
21. See for example, Yamada Mitsuharu, *Fujii Tatsukichi-no Shôgai*, Fûbaisha, Tokyo, 1974, pp.118-122, and *Kôgei Bijutsu-o Kataru*, Atoriesha, Tokyo, 1930, pp.299-308.

Criticisms by Connoissurs

If Tomimoto's criticism was directed towards the application of Yanagi's formula, two other aspects of contemporary criticism concerned with Yanagi's formula itself. The first of them, which came largely from the circle of tea and antique connoisseurs, questioned Yanagi's abilities as a *me-kiki*. Their comments pointed to some major weaknesses of Yanagi's formula: firstly, while some *getemono* did have a high aesthetic quality, they were also extremely rare; and secondly, from the connoisseur's viewpoint, the *getemono* was no more than an easy entry into craft appreciation, while Yanagi's arguments against the so-called 'aristocratic craft' themselves proved that he was unfamiliar with the works of highest quality.[22]

Perhaps an example of this criticism can be found in Tanikawa Tetsuzô. Tanikawa was originally inspired by Yanagi to appreciate Mingei, but later became distant from his group. Although he did not voice his disagreements with Yanagi at the time, he later wrote:

> As far as ceramics are concerned, I gradually departed from Mr Yanagi's side... by 'departed', I mean that I became attracted to items which Mr Yanagi

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22. Kitaôji Rosanjin's abuse of Yanagi in the former's personal magazine *Seikô* (Starry Hill) in 1930 is well known, but I have not seen the original *Seikô* and I referred to Shirasaki Hideo (*Kitaôji Rosanjin* vol.2, pp.273-287) and Idekawa Naoki (*Mingei: Riron-no Hôkai-to Yôshiki-no Tanjô*, pp.30-37) for quotations from Rosanjin's articles.

dismissed.

> It was because I was sliding into the world of tea... I began to see in the strong *déformé* of the tea utensils of the Momoyama period a sphere of beauty that is quite unique to Japan.[23]

Tanikawa was introduced to Hara Tomitarô (*Gô*: Sankei) and Matsunaga Yasuzaemon (*Gô*: Jian), two of the most highly regarded tea connoisseurs in the first half of this century, alongside Masuda Takashi (*Gô*: Don'ô) (see Chapter Three). Tanikawa recalls how he learned, at Hara Sankei's tea ceremonies, 'how the hanging scroll, the tea bowl, the tea container and the vase came alive at the occasion'.[24] From the experience of preparing his own tea room for the ceremony, he also learned that:

> For the occasion, one must create a harmony both in shape and colour, or rather, create a harmony as the organic construction of shape and colour within the framework of a tea room... If the shape of the utensil is plain, such as round or square, it becomes too monotonous. With diversity of shape, the harmony becomes a real harmony.
>
> Consequently, if utensils, which are meant to come alive when combined, are taken away from the whole context, it is natural that they do lose their beauty.[25]

Although not directly addressed to Yanagi, Tanikawa warns here that one should not judge the beauty of tea utensils without seeing them used in context. He also claims that one should not deny the tradition of the tea ceremony as a whole because of its present state of degradation.[26]

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23. 'Kobijutsu Jûwa' (Ten Stories on Old Art), 1965, *Jômon-teki Genkei to Yayoi-teki Genkei*, Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 1984 (1971), pp.117-18.
24. *Jômon-teki Genkei to Yayoi-teki Genkei*, p.119.
25. *Jômon-teki Genkei to Yayoi-teki Genkei*, p.125.
26. *Jômon-teki Genkei to Yayoi-teki Genkei*, p.127.

The other main criticism of Yanagi's formula expressed apprehension at the effects of Yanagi's writings. Aoyama Jirô, who considered Japan 'a country of tea and antiques', saw Yanagi's formula as an amateurising of connoisseurship. Aoyama prided himself on his ability to discover beauty in objects which had been unnoticed, and he claimed that objects whose beauty was obvious to anyone would be of no interest to him.[27] For him, appreciation of *getemono* was something which one was able to achieve only after seeing and understanding art and craftworks of the highest order.[28] He was also conscious of the difference between the act of art appreciation and the act of writing about it.[29] In an age when art criticism had become literature (see Chapter One), his writings on Kobayashi Hideo is significant:

> People listen to Kobayashi, who speaks about Sesshû, but no one has seen Sesshû as Kobayashi did. What do people who have no opportunity to see a Sesshû or no eye for his work, expect from the author [Kobayashi]? - This is evidence that people are reading Kobayashi's art criticism as literature. 'Is beauty a trust [*shinyô*], then? Yes, it is.' So the author trusts literature.[30]

To see beauty in objects is a personal experience. One can do this while not outwardly expressing it. Writing

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27. See for example, 'Kobayashi Hideo-to Sanjûnen' (Thirty Years with Kobayashi Hideo)(1951), in *Kamakura Bunshi Kottô Kidan*, Kôdansha, Tokyo, 1992, pp.31-2.
28. 'Tôkyô' (Pottery Sutra), 1931, *Kamakura Bunshi Kottô Kidan*, p.91.
29. Estimates of Aoyama's expertise as a *me-kiki*, and that of Kobayashi Hideo who was his pupil in connoisseurship, often vary, and I am not in a position to make a judgement on the matter. See, for example, Shirasaki Hideo, *Kitaôji Rosanjin* II, pp.251-53.
30. 'Kobayashi Hideo-to Sanjûnen', 1951, *Kamakura Bunshi Kottô Kidan*, p.29.

about the experience of perceiving beauty, on the other hand, belongs to the sphere of communication through literature. The two different activities are easily confused, however. Readers may feel they are seeing the original beauty, while in fact they are reading literature through which only the writer truly communicates with the reader. The difference was important for Aoyama. For both Aoyama and Kobayashi, beauty is given only to those who actually see it:

> No prominent painter has ever painted beauty. No prominent poet has ever sung beauty. Beauty cannot be painted or sung. It is a discovery, a creation, of those who see it. (Aoyama)[31]

> There are beautiful flowers; there is no such thing as the beauty of flowers. (Kobayashi)[32]

For people like Aoyama and Ishimaru, Yanagi's theory probably appeared to be redundant at best and misleading at worst - misleading, because it led many people to believe that they understood the beauty of folk crafts from reading Yanagi, rather than developing an eye for it. It was not surprising, therefore, that Aoyama was sarcastic when referring to Shikiba Ryûzaburô and Yoshida Shôya, who had taken Yanagi's formula as a working manual for creating beautiful objects, nor that he wanted little to do with the movement in which New Mingei was becoming dominant.

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31. 'Nihon-no Tôki' (Japanese Pottery), 1953, *Kamakura Bunshi Kottô Kidan*, p.118.
32. 'Taima' [a Nô play], 1942, *Kobayashi Hideo Shû*, Chikuma Shobô, Tokyo, 1973 (1969), p.252.

5-2. Problems of the Movement

In addition to the criticisms of Yanagi's Mingei theory, there were two issues which divided the members in the course of the movement: the question of the position and role of the individual craft artist and the aesthetic standard of the New Mingei. A crucial element underlying these peoblems was the religious nature of Yanagi's aesthetic. Before starting an analysis, therefore, one needs to look at the environment of his aesthetic.

Yanagi's Religious Aesthetic

Although there have been a number of published investigations into the sources of Yanagi's Mingei theory, the range of possible sources remains extremely wide. Yanagi had studied a vast number of religious, philosophical and aesthetic ideas from which he could draw inspiration and information. Furthermore, his aesthetic of folk crafts was so closely related to many of his early ideas on religion and traditional Eastern thought that any suggestion that he was solely or mostly influenced by Western ideas (such as Ruskin, Morris or Blake) would be unconvincing.

One thing which should be noted when considering his religious thought is that he was never personally religious: despite his interest in piety and psychic

phenomena, for example, his family and close friends claim that Yanagi never believed in them himself. As for superstitious customs which were practised in various forms and degrees in everyday life in Japan, he was positively against them. In a *zadankai* with Jugaku Bunshô, Yanagi's son Munemichi (an industrial designer) spoke of an interesting personal aspect of Yanagi:

> [My father] might have been interested in various phenomena [religious or superstitious], but I don't think he himself had anything to do with it. For example, at the temple or shrine, Mr Kawai would clap his hands and pray. My father never did. He always stood and looked straight, and never clapped his hands... When he was terminally ill, he complained of a pain. My mother suggested that he chanted *nenbutsu*. [Yanagi wrote many essays, particularly towards the end of his life, on salvation through chanting *nenbutsu*] My father was furious, and said *nenbutsu* would be useless. So, I don't think he was that kind of person at all.[33]

It will also be helpful here to identify another source of inspiration which seems to have helped Yanagi to combine art and spirituality - analysis of French Gothic art.[34]

In 1921, Yanagi published an article, 'Chûseiki-no Geijutsu' (Art of the Middle Ages), in *Shirakaba*. The content of the article is a summary of the introduction and conclusion of Emile Mâle's *Religious Art in France of*

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33. Jugaku Bunshô, *Yanagi Sôetsu-to Tomoni*, p.24.
34. I here incorporate some material concerning the influence of Mâle on Yanagi from an appendix of my MA Preliminary thesis 'The Kelmscott Press in the 1890s: An Attempt to Assess William Morris's Private Press in the Context of a Japanese Aesthetic', submitted to the University of Melbourne in 1984.

the Thirteenth Century.[35] The main text of Mâle's book is a detailed analysis of medieval iconography. In his introduction, Mâle analyses the characteristics of medieval art in relation to the working method of the craftsmen, and compares it to that of the Renaissance:

> There was in art a [sic] something impersonal and profound, and one might say that such or such an attitude, such or such a symbolic grouping was the common choice. Surely it was not individual choice but the corporate Christian consciousness which lighted upon that sublime gesture of the Saviour when on the Day of Judgment He shows His wounds to mankind...
>
> Mediæval art is like mediæval literature, its value lies less in conscious talent than in diffused genius. The personality of the artist does not always appear, but countless generations of men speak through his mouth, and the individual, even when mediocre, is lifted by the genius of these Christian centuries... Following an accepted model it was possible for even a modest artist to produce a work which made a strong emotional appeal. One may well prefer the traditional Christ of the Gothic cathedrals showing His wounds to mankind to the vengeful Judge whom the genius of a Michelangelo, unhampered by tradition, conceived as cursing the lost.[36]

The second paragraph of the above passage actually appears in Yanagi's text. It is most likely that the religious philosopher who declared 'Silence speaks for religion', and quoted Tennyson's "The Ancient Sage" at the opening of his essay, agreed with Mâle's preference for the spirituality of Gothic art to the individuality of

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35. Published originally in French in 1902; English translation first published in 1913. I used *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France in the Thirteenth Century*, Dora Nussey (trans.), Harper & Row, New York, 1972.
36. Emile Mâle, *The Gothic Image: Religious Art in France of the thirteenth Century*, Dora Nussey (trans.), Harper & Row, New York, 1972, pp.4-5.

Michelangelo.[37] In his conclusion, Mâle argues against Viollet-le-Duc's vision of medieval art as an expression of a spirit of rebellion against the feudal system and the established faith. In contrast, Mâle presents his image of its producers:

> The mediæval artist was neither a rebel, nor a "thinker", nor a precursor of the Revolution. To interest the public in his work, it is no longer necessary to present him in such a light. It is enough to show him as he really was, simple, modest and sincere. This conception of him is more pleasing to the modern mind. He was the docile interpreter of great ideas which it took all his genius to comprehend. Invention was rarely permitted to him. The Church left little more than pieces of pure decoration to his individual fancy, but in them his creative power had free play and he wove a garland of all living things to adorn the house of God. Plants, animals, all those beautiful creatures that waken curiosity and tenderness in the soul of the child and of the simple, there grew under his fingers. Through them the cathedral became a living thing, a gigantic tree full of birds and flowers, less like a work of man than of nature.[38]

Mâle's image is the 'simple, modest and sincere' craftsman, who obeyed the symbolic rules laid out by the Church, diligently working while his creation assumed a character of the beauty of nature. This view is reflected in Yanagi's vision of nature working through the hands of the unquestioning worker. Furthermore, Mâle repeats his comparison of this art with that of the Renaissance:

> On the one hand is a national art, born of the common thought and will, on the other an imported art which was not rooted in the soil... And so while art of the sixteenth or seventeenth century tells us little of the deeper thought of the France of that day,

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37. 'Silence speaks for religion' in 'On "Nothingness"' (1918), *Zenshû*, vol.2, p.29; Tennyson's "The Ancient Sage" is quoted in English, in 'Samazama naru Shûkyôteki Hitei' (Various denials in religion) : *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.2, pp.44-45.
38. *The Gothic Image*, p.396.

> thirteenth-century art on the contrary gives full expression to a civilisation, to an epoch in history.[39]

For a scholar of religion who was familiar with the thought and literature of both the East and the West, it would not be difficult to combine his potter friends' candid admiration of ordinary wares and their speculation on the production process with Mâle's interpretation of the art of the Christian faith as it flourished in France. One may say that Yanagi found in his own soil an art which showed the same depth and spiritual character as that of Gothic art as he knew it. An anecdote during his trip to France in 1929 is telling in this context. Yanagi and his party went to see the cathedral of Chartres. Leach recalls:

> After a long pause, standing before those twin towers and looking at the tall figures, at the bottom of those columns of masonry came the voice of Yanagi saying, "That is what you have lost. That is what you need, a new Gospel."[40]

The question of craft artists and direction

The series of *zadankai* between 1933 and 1934 failed to produce a clear direction for the movement. Tomimoto's participation in the earlier *zadankai* was important: he was more enthusiastic than any other craft artist in the group about producing good and cheap products in large quantities, and he showed no hesitation about incorporating machine production for the purpose. The reason Tomimoto was closer to the Mingei group than the

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39. *The Gothic Image*, p.398.
40. Leach, *Hamada: potter*, p.164.

New Craft of Takamura Toyochika and others may have been that the latter lacked a strong connection with the past. Perhaps Tomimoto saw that the Mingei group had a potential to develop a new philosophy of craft which would be able to carry the group's aesthetics into a new social and industrial environment. The presence of Mizutani and his colleagues from the Department of Commerce and Industry also left open the possibilitiy of a connection to the Imperial Craft Society, which was supported by the Department. Yanagi, however, was rather hesitant about sharing Tomimoto's urge for a craft revolution. When Tomimoto left the group, these possibilities also disappeared, and the group headed towards revivalism.

The question of the role of the craft artists (*kojin sakka*) within the movement and Yanagi's valuation of their work, against his denial of individualism, puzzled even some of his devoted followers.[41] It was also the major cause for the split in the movement after the Pacific War, when Miyake Tadaichi, who thought that Yanagi's 'theory' of folk crafts contradicted his practice of using the Folk Craft Museum to display the works of the craft artists such as Hamada, Kawai and Serizawa, left the Association. He established the *Nihon Kôgei Kyôdan* (Japan Craft Cooperative) in 1953 and founded the *Nihon Kôgeikan* (Japan Craft Gallery) which excluded works of craft artists from

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41. See, for example, Sôma Teizô's article in *Yanagi Sôetstu Zenshû*, 'Geppô', no.21, p.3.

display.

The issue of the position and role of craft artists within the movement was not a problem for the original group of craft artists and connoisseurs. Craft artists were recognised simply as creative artists who either took inspiration from folk crafts or, as in Tomimoto's case, tried to compete against them through refinement of their own art. It became a problem only when Yanagi's formula was received as a kind of manual for appreciating and creating the supreme beauty which he advocated, while his ideal vision, of the craft artists instructing the artisans, did not go beyond experiments.

When the main members discussed the future direction of the movement, their discussions centred around the choice between mechanical mass production and the cooperation of craft artists and craft workers (artisans) in handicraft productions. The former would mean a commitment to quality mass production for the present and future, and the latter would involve a cooperative led by craft artists. There is no material to suggest that any of the major members, that is, the original members and men such as Mizutani, thought that Yanagi's formula could be used as a practical inspiration for reproducing beautiful Mingei. In a letter published in the 46th issue of *Kôgei* (October 1934), Bernard Leach clearly stated his opposition to attempts to recreate the old environment (original article in Japanese):

> What I consider a mistake of the magazine *Kôgei* is that it expects a new art to be born from the people themselves in response to the demand which is latent in Japan today. On this point, I believe that it is impossible for a new art to rise from the old way, that is, the way the unconscious art of the peasants was born. On the other hand, Japan has experience on a national scale in the handling of wood, lacquer, cotton, silk, metal etc. to make everyday objects or novelties. It also has a fifty years of experience in Western-style industrial production. I am certain that in this country, therefore, the craftsman who is a creative artist - what you call *kojin sakka* - is the only one who can develop work which will bring pleasure to both the hand and the heart.
>
> I think the *kojin sakka* should choose one of two ways: one is to cooperate with the remaining handicraft artisans and the other is to get involved in the factory. In the end, the conflict between these two modes of production will disappear. But at present, it is necessary to have a clear view of the difference between them.[42]

Yanagi definitely preferred Yoshida's approach, however. The last two topical *zadankai* held in September and October 1934 clearly showed this. And, close to Yanagi, strongly supporting him, was Kawai rather than Hamada. While Kawai's own work often showed contrivance (to Yanagi's chagrin), he seems to have considered religious piety an integral part of craftmaking. His religion, however, was quite different from Yanagi's. In contrast to Yanagi's rational approach as a leader, Kawai's was personal: he was tolerant and forgiving to others but deeply self-reflective.[43] This made him prefer speaking about art and craft in terms of morality. The following exchange among Kawai, Leach, Koide, and Yanagi illustrates

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42. *Kôgei*, no.46, 1934, pp.16-17.
43. This can be observed in his essays and poems, as well as Arakawa Genjirô's *Fuwari-to Piriri*, Satsuki Shobô, Tokyo, 1990.

the point.

The subject of the discussion is Kawai's Korean assistant named Sung. Kawai, Leach and Yanagi all agree that Sung is an unusual person in that he shows little emotion, does not spend money on anything but minimum necessities and works consistently. They also agree that he produces beautiful objects: in Yanagi's words, 'There's nothing positively ugly in what he makes.'[44] So, Kawai asks, where does his power to create beauty come from? The discussion follows, in essence:

> Leach: That's because he's a pre-modern man. We can't be like that.
> Kawai: You mustn't dismiss him that way... He has something which we have lost... We can retrieve it within ourselves if we try hard enough... I want to learn from him.
> Koide: What Mr Kawai receives from Sung then will be a reversion to the old...
> Yanagi: In any age, when critics do not understand the real value of old things and label them as a reversion, then put it aside...
> Leach: Sung's work is good, but something is missing from it.
> Koide: Sung's work isn't enough. I am talking about a new kind of movement quite apart from that.[45]

While all recognise Sung's merits, their approaches are clearly different. Leach and Koide regard him as an exception, a remnant from an old time that is gone. To Kawai and Yanagi, he is living proof that such characters still exist on earth for other people to learn from; nor do they see striving towards an ideal like this one as revivalism, because truth is always truth.

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44. *Kôgei*, no.48, 1934, p.54.
45. *Kôgei*, no.48, 1934, pp.54-56.

An exchange in the other *zadankai* illustrates the difference in their opinions on the cooperation of craft artists (*kojin sakka*) and artisans (*shokunin*). The discussion involves Yanagi, Leach, Mizutani and Hamada:

Yanagi: In fact, it is a big problem for the *sakka* to decide how to work in harmony with artisans.

Leach: In my view, the ordinary workers - artisans - will want to know about craft artists. So the problem is that, when the craft artist creates a design, how should he give it to the artisans? There must be a way to unite the craft artist and artisans.

Mizutani: The way will only be found when both the artisans and the craft artist trust each other from their different positions.

Yanagi: Exactly...

Leach: It is not easy for artisans to become craft artists. But they do want to be artists. So we'll have many of those who are halfway [between artists and artisans]. What shall we do about them?

Hamada: They're a nuisance because they obstruct our work. I think they have to be sacrificed.

Leach: Not only in craft but also in religion, there are both types - ones with great understanding, and ones with ordinary faith... the ordinary people do not understand, but because they had faith, they find a way. But to make them really understand, they have to be shown everything.

Yanagi: But people who cannot understand and yet have faith are awesome. Those who believe deeply without understanding do greater work than those who understand only partly and follow the way.[46]

Here, Leach presents a practical viewpoint. He knows that in this age even traditionally trained artisans without imagination 'want to be artists'. Hamada brushes them aside as a nuisance. Yanagi is not interested in such people. He is only concerned with those who 'believe

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46. *Kôgei*, no.46, 1934, pp.50-52.

deeply without understanding'. They are his ideal craftsmen. The way Yanagi and Yoshida refer to Yoshida's work in Tottori is telling in this context:

> Yanagi: With regard to Yoshida's various attempts in Tottori, the artisans all have confidence in Yoshida and are working hard in their jobs. They visit Yoshida every night. That is why they have achieved so much. They are searching for something in their minds...
>
> Yoshida: In some ceramics, I personally prefer Inkyûzan to Ushinoto both for the taste of the glaze and for the taste of the clay body. But it is Ushinoto where they have a complete confidence in me and faithfully follow the models I provide, while in Inkyûzan the kiln owner is a strongheaded man who would not listen to me easily. So at Ushinoto they managed to reach the present stage. I can't work unless they trust me...[47]

Yoshida had complete faith in Yanagi's teachings, and the artisans at Ushinoto had complete faith in Yoshida's leadership. This was Yanagi's ideal model for the spiritual aspect, if not for the quality, of craft production; and this was the way Yanagi chose to proceed in the future.

The Aesthetic Standard of the New Mingei

The emergence of New Mingei turned the course of the movement, by applying Yanagi's formula to actual production without questioning the validity of the formula for that purpose. As a result, it created a serious dilemma for both Yanagi and the movement as a whole. Because of a feeling of moral responsibility, it seems, Yanagi could not apply the high standard of his

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47. *Kôgei*, no.46, 1934, pp.535-4.

expectations to the New Mingei products. When Muraoka Kageo reported that the first and second firings of the Ushinoto kiln, which had been supervised by Yoshida, were a great success, one may wonder what that really meant.[48]

The first evidence of friction appeared in *Kôgei*, in the form of debate between Ishimaru Shigeharu and Yoshida Shôya. Ishimaru, after seeing the New Mingei exhibition of San'in in the north-west of the Honshû Island, wrote:

> What I felt most was that, compared to the spring exhibition, which mostly showed collections from the remaining traditional craft of Kyûshû and San'in, how difficult it is to instruct the production of craft... To be honest, I would rather have bought something at the show, but left without buying any. I do not feel I have the right to comment negatively, considering the fact that local craft has been revived and that a lot of effort has been put in to reach the current level [of production]. But it may serve as a critical comment to think why I could not find anything I wanted to buy. The problem will be to determine whether the producer should learn to develop a critical eye as he works, or have his work supervised by a someone with a critical eye.[49]

Here Ishimaru gives a sympathetic criticism of the quality of the New Mingei products as well as valuable and constructive suggestions. In reply, Yoshida Shôya quoted Yanagi's formula, which claimed that the beauty of Mingei came from repetition in production. He continued:

> The artisans today also work in repetition. But they cannot produce good products due to their living conditions, the models they use and the material they use. Leaving their living conditions aside, I believe that if we carefully select the model and the material we give them, the revival of Mingei will be achieved. To this, I may add that instructing Mingei is in fact selecting good models and giving them to

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48. *Kôgei*, no.92, 1938, p.2.
49. *Kôgei*, no.12, 1931, pp.38-39.

the artisans.[50]

Yoshida Shôya believed, in other words, that if the artisans spent enough time copying the works of craft artists, they would produce works that would surpass the original.[51]

On the other hand, Yanagi's original driving force for the movement was his uncompromising standard of beauty. When the New Mingei started, his two functions - Yanagi the *me-kiki* (even if his expertise was limited to one area), and Yanagi the leader in the religion of beauty - inevitably clashed. He could not subject his faithful followers to the scrutinising eye of a connoisseur. Some compromise to resolve this contradiction was unavoidable.

In 1933, the cane furniture section of the Kurashiki Technical School submitted a cane chair to the Kokugakai exhibition. The school had previously invited Yoshida Shôya and Yanagi Sôetsu for instruction. The chair was accepted for the exhibition. Takeuchi Kesshin wrote:

> I hear that, at the selection, although some of its aspects were considered inadequate, the general direction of its work was recognised and was accepted.[52]

So, an entry in one of the major national exhibitions was accepted on the basis of its 'general direction'. This was clearly favouritism. This kind of indulgence on

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50. *Kôgei*, no.15, 1932, p.48.
51. *Kôgei*, no.15, 1932, pp.48-49.
52. *Kôgei*, no.32, 1933, p.19. The article includes a plate showing the chair, which seems rather heavily decorated.

Yanagi's part might have encouraged the producers to strive for better, but it must have been additionally unpleasant for Tomimoto who detested compromise in quality.

In 1939, in the new magazine *Mingei Monthly*, Aizu Ryûhei opened a lively debate with Yoshida Shôya and Asanuma Kijitsu on the quality of the products sold at Takumi, the outlet primarily for Yoshida's New Mingei. The debate echoes the earlier debate between Ishimaru and Yoshida on *Kôgei*. Aizu sees Takumi as 'a place to turn the craft theory of Mr Yanagi and others into practice and thus attract and maintain our attention'.[53] In his third letter to Yoshida, Aizu poses some questions:

> Does Mr Yanagi Sôetsu, whom Mr Yoshida proudly named as the first in line of their selectors, exercise his judgement and selection for the products sold at Takumi with the same passion as he has towards his [objects in the] Folk Craft Museum?
>
> That is one of the things I want to know.
>
> I regret that I find that Takumi's shop-front seems so stereotyped and confused recently that I had to raise this doubt.
>
> This stagnation cannot happen if Mr Yanagi exercises his selective eye.[54]

The debate ended with Yoshida's somewhat shrill answer to this letter in no.7, and Aizu never wrote in the magazine again.

Part of the confusion over the quality of the New Mingei

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53. *Mingei Monthly*, no.5, p.32.
54. *Mingei Monthly*, no.5, pp.32-33.

could have been avoided had Yanagi gone further in his discovery of Mingei and recognised the fact that he was attracted to only a few out of thousands of ordinary wares, and tried to explain what they had in common, and also what factors set those special pieces apart from others of the same kind. His writing then would have headed in a different direction. It did not happen, however. Yanagi was not an art critic. His interest and experience lay, first and foremost, in spirituality. And, as he wrote as early as 1913:

> What drives us in philosophy is our longing for the sound enrichment of our personality. With an infinite desire, we must build up our own philosophy on the fundation of our temperament, which is based on an undeniable individuality. No philosophy has life or authority away from our own self. Truth is only found within our own experience. After all, philosophy is a study of direct experience in the depth of individuality. As in the old saying: '*Nur was du fühlst, das ist dein Eigenthum* [Only what you feel is your property].'[55]

New leaders of the movement and the New Mingei

For the new direction of the movement to proceed, particularly when its theoretical base was already contradictory in itself, it was necessary to have devoted followers at different levels who would faithfully respond to Yanagi's expectations. Muraoka Kageo, a theologian, was one such man. He interpreted Yanagi's various papers and supported his stand. While admitting some theoretical weaknesses in the rationale of the practice at Ushinoto,

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55. 'Temperament in Philosophy', *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.2, p.233.

he praised Yoshida's efforts which had 'created results'.[56]

Another important figure in this context was Tonomura Kichinosuke (1898-1993), a weaver. Tonomura read Yanagi's 'Kôgei-no Michi' as a young Christian aspiring to become a priest. Yanagi's writing inspired him to go into craft-making. He later established a folkcraft museum in Kurashiki and became the director of Kumamoto International Folk Crafts Museum.[57]

The New Mingei movement began in 1931 when Dr Yoshida Shôya set up a craft cooperative and an outlet for its products in his native city of Tottori. This movement was quite different from the other current in that its major significance was more socio-economic than aesthetic: it responded to the urgent need to revitalise the rural economy which had been depressed as a result of the government policy of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, as well as the global depression (see Chapter One). In order to fully explore the significance of the New Mingei movement, therefore, an approach that is outside the scope of this thesis would be required.[58] Here, one may only suggest a few points in relation to the creative craft movement, the other current of the Mingei movement.

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56. *Kôgei*, no.92, 1938, p.5.
57. *Mingei*, no.486, Nipon Mingei Kyôkai, 1993, pp.24-26.
58. Lisbeth K. Brandt, a PhD candidate at Columbia University, New York, is currently researching this aspect of the movement.

Yanagi's Mingei theory provided a spiritual and aesthetic support for revivalism in craft: Yanagi taught not only that ordinary people could produce beautiful objects but also that the beauty of ordinary products was superior to any other form of art or craft. Although Yanagi also taught specifically 'to see objects without preconceptions', the major discrepancy in his theory - that the actual craftworks which he showed to prove his point were far from 'ordinary', but only the selected few which satisfied Yanagi's acute connoisseurship - was not openly questioned.

When written in the authoritative style of his religious discourse, Yanagi's message strongly appealed to many people. Yanagi's social and intellectual credibility added authority to his writing. It was not by accident that many of the regional craft leaders - practitioners or otherwise - were Christians or Buddhists who quickly and deeply responded to Yanagi's religious aesthetics. One of them was Ôhara Magosaburô (1880-1943), a giant of the textile industry. He was a major Christian patron of the movement, supporting the two levels of the Mingei movement. He (and his son Sôichirô, 1909-1968) patronised many of its craft artists and donated 100,000 yen in 1935 to build the Japan Folk Crafts Museum in Tokyo, while

introducing the movement to the local craft industry.[59] Ôhara had already begun a craft revival in 1924 by having Kojima Torajirô (1881-1929), an oil painter, instruct in woodwork at the Kurashiki Vocational School.[60] With Kojima's death in 1929, the project came to a hault. Ôhara then took a keen interest in the emerging Mingei movement. The school invited Yanagi and Yoshida Shôya to instruct in the cane furniture section of the School in 1932.[61]

Yanagi also actively tried to involve local authorities in the movement. *Kôgei* no.10 (1931) reports on a dinner party at an inn in Matsue, the capital of Shimane prefecture, adjacent to Tottori, on the coast of the Sea of Japan. According to Ôta Naoyuki, the reporter, the party was planned by Yanagi, and 'only important people from the [local] government authority and private sector who were influential in the future of the craft movement were selected' and invited to the party. The report says that Yanagi impressed the VIPs by decorating the room and serving food only in good craftworks from their own

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59. Ôhara's company, Kurashiki Bôseki, dominated the economy and culture of the city of Kurashiki, establishing various cultural, medical and educational institutions.
60. Kojima Torajirô was a close friend of Ôhara's, who provided the artist for all means. He also trusted Kojima with collecting European paintings, for which he built a museum after the early death of the artist. I could not identify the said Vocational School in the official history of Kurashiki.
61. Takeuchi Kesshin, 'Kurashiki-to sono Kinzai-no Kôgei', *Kôgei*, no.10, 1931, pp.17-22. Takeuchi was an engineering graduate of the Tokyo Imperial University (now Tokyo University). He entered Ôhara's company and was put in charge of the Ôhara Museum of Art.

prefecture.[62]

The New Mingei movement, as the term suggests, was not simply revivalism. It was also a cultural movement inspired by, and striving to achieve, the ethical and aesthetic values which Yanagi had established. As such, it embodied a stronger social and economic significance. An indication of its influence is that beginning from October 1940 the *Mingei Monthly*, the magazine of the New Mingei, carried a number of *zadankai* and articles on the war effort and the role of the Mingei movement in the new national system. While no part of the art/craft industry escaped military control during the war, some organisations were deemed more important in serving the nation than others. The cultural and ethical values of the New Mingei were obviously considered useful in this regard.[63] On the other hand, *Kôgei*, which was serving purely for aesthetic and intellectual interests, had no similar articles during the same period.

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62. *Kôgei*, no.10, p.7. Ôta Naoyuki was a trustee of the Tottori Chamber of Commerce at the time. He was a classmate of Kawai Kanjirô's, and was involved in the Mingei movement in Shimane prefecture.
63. The October issue of the *Mingei Monthly* came out as a special issue on Mingei and the *Shintaisei* (New Regime), carrying articles such as: 'A Proposal for the Organisation of Handicraft Culture' by the Japan Mingei Association; 'The Standard of Beauty in the New Regime' by Tonomura Kichinosuke and Hamada Shôji; 'The Problem of the New Regime and the Beauty of Craft' by Yanagi Sôetsu. Other special issues include: The Okinawan Language Issue (no.20/21, 1941);'The Lifestyle of Female Labourers' (no.24, 1941); 'The Working Culture and Problems of Housing' (no.28, 1941); 'Reflections on Mingei and Craft Education in War' (no.33, 1942); and 'Celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the Founding of Manchukuo' (no.37, 1942).

So it was such men as Yoshida Shôya, Shikiba Ryûzaburô, Muraoka Kageo and Tonomura Kichinosuke who determined the course of the movement with their devotion to Yanagi's view of the world. There was, however, one major force within the movement which kept a more rational aesthetic view alive after 1934. This was Mizutani Ryôichi.

Mizutani Ryôichi and his role in the movement

Mizutani Ryôichi (1901-1959) was an enigmatic figure in the Mingei movement. Yanagi often conveyed his deep respect for Mizutani to people close to him despite the fact that Mizutani was younger than himself. Mizutani always stayed behind the scene in the movement. On the other hand, he seems to have exercised some influence from his position in the Department of Commerce and Industry (*Shôkôshô*).[64] For example, according to Mr. Okamura, Mizutani initiated the invitation to Charlotte Perriand (1903-?), a pupil of Le Corbusier, to visit Japan from France in 1940. Perriand was invited by the government as part of the policy to improve the quality of craft, in an attempt to increase craft export. Okamura believes that Mizutani hoped to inspire the New Mingei and some young craft artists, as well as the Japanese craft industry in general. But despite his initial close association with

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64. I regret that I have been unable to obtain Mizutani's full biography. In *Kôgei* no.24, which included Mizutani's first article, he is introduced as the section chief of the Bureau of Statistics. Later he moved to the Department of Commerce and Industry.

Yanagi, Mizutani eventually became alienated from him.

Mizutani's thoughts on art and craft, as reflected in many of his essays, were quite different from Yanagi's.[65] He was a highly cultivated man and was well acquainted with Western learning and languages (French and English) as well as with traditional Japanese high art and learning - particularly the *nô* performance, which he practised himself as an amateur.[66] He also showed analytical skills and communicated well with people. It was with these qualities that Mizutani supplemented and supported Yanagi in the movement.

Mizutani's involvement in and contribution to the movement took three forms. Firstly he contributed to the research into various remaining folk crafts, particularly *aka-e* (red enamel overglaze) and pottery kilns.[67] He travelled with Yanagi and others in search of remaining folk crafts. And in addition to contributing research essays, he translated articles by Eric Gill, Bernard Leach and others into Japanese for *Kôgei*.

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65. Most of Mizutani's essays were published in *Kôgei*, but some are in other publications. I am grateful to Mr Okamura Kichiemon for lending me *Akae-no Keifu*, a collection of Mizutani's revised essays published in limited editions (500 copies) in 1948.
66. For Mizutani's support and inspiration for Munakata, see Chapter Six.
67. The subjects of Mizutani's writings include: *aka-e* (red enamel overglaze), *sometsuke* (underglaze), *doro-e* (mud-picture, or the popular form of Western-style painting), the ordinary pottery of Inashirogawa (an old-established pottery region of Korean descendants), and short essays on Japanese aesthetics.

Secondly, he took a leading role in *zadankai*. He not only attended all the topical *zadankai*, but also chaired the discussion and comprehensively reported it on many occasions. Thirdly, he committed himself to support young craft artists in the movement. Those who enjoyed Mizutani's patronage include Yanagi's son Munemichi (an industrial designer) and nephew Yoshitaka (a weaver), Munakata Shikô (a printmaker), Suzuki Shigeo (a lacquer artist) and Okamura Kichiemon (a stencil dyeing designer).[68] To date, minimal reference to Mizutani's roles has been made in various writings on the Mingei movement. But if one attempts to clarify some of the main issues of the movement, it is necessary to examine his aesthetic vis-a-vis that of Yanagi.

Mizutani's taste in art reflected his knowledge and accomplishments: Okamura Kichiemon, one of the younger craft artists who enjoyed Mizutani's support both in theoretical and material aspects, recalls that Mizutani regarded *kaku* (status) as an important element in judging the aesthetic quality of objects. Okamura also remembers the following as Mizutani's pet theory:

> Even when making ordinary wares of the New Mingei, unless the status of the tea utensils are followed, [the makers] will have difficulties in sustaining the cultural life of their products. Unless their wares have a status of their own which has a distinct taste from that of old wares, they will not be able to

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68. Of these, Munakata was only two years younger than Mizutani. As far as intellectual matters (aesthetics, Buddhism etc.) were concerned, however, their relationship seems to have been that of a master and pupil. See, for example, Munakata, *Bangokudô*, Chûôkôronsha, 1976, pp.213-14.

> become the mainstream in a future lifestyle. Degradation of their status will mean corruption. Hamada's or Kawai's pottery is all right when serving meals to you [young friends], but it's not good enough for entertaining more formal guests. It will have to be Leach's or Tomimoto's. When entertaining guests, particular sensitivities are required... That is where the 'taste and status', including those of Mingei, have their limitations.[69]

Here Mizutani's points are: firstly, that he regards the utensils for the tea ceremony as the models of the mainstream status of ceramics. His second point is that craft works of a particular genre, even when they reach a certain standard, are not appropriate for occasions which require status. Mizutani's judgement of Hamada's pottery echoes the earlier comments by Hamada himself when he said one could not serve Western tea in the noodle cup or Western cakes on the horse-eye plate. For Mizutani, Mingei and its style were 'beautiful but inferior in status'.[70]

Yanagi never discussed status. If he had recognised it as one of the qualities of beauty, he would have lost grounds for insisting on the supremacy of the beauty of folk crafts over what he called 'aristocratic craft'. Thus, even when he referred to *nô*, which Mizutani regarded as an expression of highest status, Yanagi only discussed its stylised form (*kata*) as craft-like character which made the art surpass individualism and achieve profundity.[71]

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69. Okamura Kichiemon, *Yanagi Sôetsu-to Shoki Mingei Undô*, p.193.
70. Okamura Kichiemon, *Yanagi Sôetsu-to Shoki Mingei Undô*, p.193.
71. 'Kôgei-teki naru mono' (Things of the craft-like character, 1931), *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, p.464.

The clear difference between Yanagi and Mizutani with regard to ordinary crafts was while Yanagi's main concern was the spiritual experience associated with the appreciation of 'the ordinary', Mizutani's was its aesthetic quality as distinct from spiritual issues. One may examine this point a little further, by comparing how their approach diverged after they had agreed that: 'Most of the outstanding folk crafts of the past are nameless.' From there, Yanagi drew the following:

> It seems that in them the egoism of the individual is negated. Who made that masterpiece? Anyone of the district in that period could have. In this kind of environment [a rural community], individuals would be dissolved into the community. Who, then, could insist on his personality? The life of craft lies in anonymity. Observe a good craft work. It does not display the particular character of any individual. No compulsion of power, no overwhelming vigour, no challenging force is seen... Here, all egoism has been abandoned, all assertions are suppressed, and there remains only a speechless vessel. 'Is there a word that speaks better than this silence?' a monk asked. He also wrote, 'Silence is the word of God.'[72]

Mizutani, on the other hand, proceeds in a slightly different direction:

> 'Nameless' is not another word for 'mediocrity'. Being nameless means nothing less than the fact that it was the 'mainstream craft of the age', backed by the combined support of the people. It was the product too strongly supported by the people to be identified by the name of an individual.[73]

While Yanagi's words hover over the realm of spirituality and broad view of life, Mizutani's eye is sharply focused on the characteristics of the folk crafts in a wider

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72. Yanagi, 'Kôgei-no Bi', section 9 (see Appendix 3).
73. 'Kyôdôtai Seikatsu-to Kôgei' *Akae-no Keifu*, pp.15-16.

artistic context.

Mizutani's views of the Mingei movement can be observed in his two essays 'Kanshô-no Sôzôteki Seikaku' (The Creative Character of Connoisseurship, 1931) and 'Kyôdôtai Seikatsu-to Kôgei' (Cooperative Life and Craft, 1933).[74] In the former, his first article for *Kôgei*, Mizutani defines the Folk Craft Movement as a legitimate successor of the tradition of the tea ceremony, and discusses aspects of connoisseurship: that it relies solely on individual perception; that the practice of connoisseurship gives birth to 'aristocrats of connoisseurship'; and that this leads to the forming of a school, like that of the tea ceremony. In the second article, he claims that the Folk Craft Movement will necessarily develop from an aesthetic movement into a creative movement, and that the new tradition will be created only through a cooperative mode of production. In order to understand his vision of the cooperative and its products, one must look closely into his aesthetics.

The source of inspiration for Mizutani's vision of the future of craft was the tradition of the *nô* theatre, both in aesthetics and in the system of cooperation. In 'Nôgaku-no Bi' (The Beauty of *Nô*), Mizutani analyses the role of stylisation in the *nô* theatre. While the word *kaku* is not used, he describes how status is achieved in

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74. See Appendix 4 for extract translation of both articles.

terms of *yûgen* (profound and quiet elegance) and *taketaru kurai*, the concepts specific to the *nô* theatre:

> Thus the expression of *nô* acquires '*yûgen*' and attains '*taketaru kurai*'. '*Yûgen*' refers to the state of expression in which quietude is retained even in the midst of brilliance and gentleness, and '*taketaru kurai*' is the ultimate expression in which the state of '*yûgen*' is deepened, as well as raised in status, and brilliance and gentleness have been replaced by refined simplicity (*kotan*). It is an ultimate sphere of spiritual profundity in quietude, coolness and transparency, which provokes eternity and infinity.[75]

While this passage sounds rather esoteric, Mizutani explains in practical details how the highest subtlety of expression is achieved by the *nô* performer through the economy of movements, the effective use of light and shadow over the mask, and so on. This article was clearly written for the purpose of educating the less informed reader in the two different aesthetic traditions: the amateurism of the tea ceremony and the professionalism of the *nô*. He points out that the degradation of the tea tradition was due to the emergence of specialisation and stylisation of the ceremony in which the amateur spirit of the original tea masters was forgotten.[76] In contrast, he says, *nô* had developed as an art of professionals, an art

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75. 'Nôgaku-no Bi', *Akae-no Keifu*, p.72. Mizutani's perception of *yûgen* and *taketaru kurai* is obviously based on Zeami's *Fûshi Kaden*, written in the fourteenth century, as record of his father Kan'ami's teaching of the *nô* both in practical theory and aesthetics. The text was discovered in 1902. While the term *yûgen* is now widely known as the essence of Kan'ami's aesthetics, *taketaru kurai* is not as commonly heard. In *Fûshi Kaden*, the term appears only once, as a state achieved after many years of experience, as distinct from naturally acquired qualities. See *Kadensho (Fûshi Kaden*, Kawase Kazuma (trans. to modern Japanese), Kôdansha, 1972, p.49.
76. 'Nôgaku-no Bi', *Akae-no Keifu*, p.57.

of *kata* (form) in which individuality is diffused in the tradition and cooperation, and which in turn allows the performer to achieve a level beyond his individual abilities.[77] So, he concludes, the ideal form of cooperative of the past is found in the *nô* theatre:[78]

> The guild system was a good cradle and nursery for the tradition of the *nô* theatre. The internal working of each guild concerned the rules for maintaining life in the guild on the one hand, and the combined efforts in artistic expression on the other.[79]

The strict hierarchy within the guild ensured the standardisation of expression and its maintenance.

One may notice again that his vision is quite different from Yanagi's village community in which the unconscious producer's work created beauty. Like Aizu Ryûhei, Mizutani was clearly dissatisfied with the quality of the New Mingei, and did not believe that the Tottori style of revivalism by faith would bring about the production of quality crafts for the future.[80] Instead, he sought a solution in a new kind of cooperative, one in which strongly motivated members could work together:

Today, in the age of consciousness, only the shared

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77. 'Nôgaku-no Bi', *Akae-no Keifu*, pp.57-62.
78. In the following, I translated the word *kyôdan* as 'guild' when Mizutani refers to the old system, but as 'co-operative' when he speaks of a contemporary system, the reason being that while 'guild' is appropriate for *kyôdan* (or more specifically *za*, which is the term for the Japanese counterpart), it evokes the feudal mode of relationship among its members, which can be misleading when referring to a contemporary system.
79. 'Nôgaku-no Bi', *Akae-no Keifu*, p.62.
80. 'Kyôdôtai Seikatsu-to Kôgei' (Communal Life and Craft), 1933, *Akae-no Keifu*, p.25.

> sense of purpose can guarantee the strong bond [within the cooperative]. The future of the Folk Craft Movement depends on the ability of each craft producer within the cooperative to grasp the purpose of the cooperative and the sincerity with which all members hope for its development.[81]

It was this vision with which Mizutani critically examined or supplemented Yanagi in various articles in *Kôgei*. Except in the early years, however, Mizutani was extremely careful not to undermine Yanagi's authority when presenting views that were different from Yanagi's.[82] Because Mizutani was well acquainted with the tea ceremony, one may speculate that he shared Tanikawa's dissatisfaction with Yanagi's devaluation of Rikyû and his generalisation on the stylisation of the tea ceremony. But Mizutani avoided direct confrontation with Yanagi over the issue.[83] On the subject of *nô*, on the other hand, Yanagi's writings are few and short. Thus Mizutani was able to speak out his mind free of concern for contradicting Yanagi.

Mizutani was fully aware of the current problems of the movement both in theory and in practice. Yet he chose to stay with the movement. He did so because he still saw possibilities for it. But his vision for the future would have been more difficult for a historian of the movement

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81. 'Kyôdôtai Seikatsu-to Kôgei', *Akae-no Keifu*, pp.25-6.
82. For example, compare 'Kanshô-no Sôzôteki Seishitsu' with 'Kôgei Zuisô' in *Akae-no Keifu*, pp.133-4.
83. Yanagi wrote a large number of articles on the tea ceremony and its practice which form a volume in his complete works. The articles began around 1931 with his impression of Kizaemon, the praised tea bowl, but his main writings are from 1935 with a series *Sadô-o Omou* (Thoughts on the Tea Ceremony). Mizutani's comments did not appear until 1937.

to conceptualise if it were not for one issue of *Kôgei*. In 1937, the publication of the magazine was delayed so long that Yanagi planned to have three issues published at the same time, and asked Mizutani to take charge of the 81st issue. Mizutani obviously took advantage of this opportunity to express his opinions. Thus he published his own writing, a translation of Eric Gill's 'Art and Industrialism' and articles by some of his young craft artists.

While the issue as a whole is a valuable in itself, two pieces are of particular concern here: Mizutani's 'Talks with Young Craftsmen' and Yanagi Yoshitaka's '*Nô* Costumes, Tanba Textile and Coptic Textile'. The former is Mizutani's message to his young friends who had been gathering regularly at his house for over a year to discuss their work and ideas.[84] His passage reveals his love for and expectation of these craft artists. It is also significant that he refers to the Mingei movement as a *kyôdan* (cooperative), because this suggests that he regarded the movement itself as a cooperative, and not just its smaller portions, such as the Tottori cooperative. It follows that he expected, or at least hoped, that the search for the craft of the new age would grow within the movement through internal support and

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84. See Appendix 4 for an extract translation of the article.

criticisms.[85]

Yanagi Yoshitaka's article is unique among other articles in *Kôgei* in that he praises the "status quality" of the *nô* costumes and describes their superiority over the other two categories of textile:

> In the *nô* costume, there is a very high quality which is not found in Tanba cloth or in the Coptic cloth. Peasant women could perhaps weave Tanba cloth; the Coptic cloth could be woven with a simple, primitive loom... The *nô* costume, however, was way beyond the reach of a peasant woman; men of humble origin could not have been allowed even to see the shadow of the weaver at work. Its colour, material, patterns and weaving - there is nothing raw in them. Every shade of colour is dyed in the deepest colour possible. Even a bright colour is sombre at the same time; even a sombre colour is extremely bright at the same time. Each colour is intense to the highest degree in itself, yet harmonises perfectly with the other colours. When I look at the material, it seems impossible to draw the best of the material in any other way. I have never known an instance in which silk is used better than in the *nô* costume. When it comes to weaving, its exquisiteness and correctness fill me with respect. As for the patterns, any attempt on my part to describe [their supreme quality] would be futile. When I see the *nô* costumes, I ponder over the word '*gei*' [art/craftsmanship]. I think of the noble appearance of soaring peaks. For us who unfortunately were born in an age of confusion of beauty, when the instinct for beauty has been lost, rules that once ensured beauty have been removed and salvation is promised no longer, the only remaining way is to pursue a journey to the highest, despite any difficult obstacles in the way. As a craftsman, I recognise my aim to achieve the highest. A good *nô* costume. It is a whip of encouragement and the ray of light that leads us through[86] And, perhaps, for me it is an obsession.

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85. One is inclined to think that, as Okamura suggested in his book, there might have been an agreement between Yanagi and Mizutani to divide responsibility in the movement: Yanagi to help and oversee the New Mingei, and Mizutani to guide the craft artists. See Okamura, in *Yanagi Sôetsu and Shoki Mingei Undô*, pp.195-6.
86. *Kôgei*, no.81, pp.30-32.

This article may serve as a proof of the extent of Mizutani's influence on the young and inspired craft artists, in his attempt to keep a balanced aesthetic within the movement. For Mizutani, the success of the movement, that is, the creation of mainstream crafts which were rooted in tradition but represented continuation and not just repetition, hinged on the awareness of the future craft artists. Perhaps it was because of the strength of his belief in this potential that Mizutani did not wish to be seen to be contradicting Yanagi. He wrote in the 'Editor's Notes and Correspondence' section of his issue of *Kôgei*:

> ... although it [my opening article] is short, I am afraid that our original intentions are not clearly expressed due to the lack of practical examples. Knowing that such a method [giving practical examples] hurt others and also hurt myself, I deliberately avoided it. Perhaps because of this, when I read the passage again, I regret that it does not seem quite as focused as I would like it to be.[87]

Mizutani's aesthetic theory, if it had been given enough attention and wider support, could have functioned as a response to Tomimoto's earlier pledge for a working theory for the future of craft. It was unfortunate for the movement that the New Mingei current of the movement was too strong for Mizutani's view to grow into another current within the Mingei movement. His position lost ground as the frequency of *Kôgei* dwindled, and when the *Mingei Monthly* started under the editorship of Shikiba Ryûzaburô, its bias towards the New Mingei was evident. Consequently, Mizutani made little contribution to the

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87. *Kôgei*, no.81, p.62.

magazine.[88]

88. His only appearance in *Mingei Monthly* was in a report on his official trip to South America.

CHAPTER SIX

The Mingei Movement as a Modern Craft Movement

The modernist aspect of the Mingei movement involved a perceptual evolution, a process related to how the craft artists of the movement took part in the aesthetic adventure of 'learning from ordinary crafts' and how they worked in relation to Yanagi's theory and aesthetic.

The craft artists of the Mingei movement were part of the modern trends in art and craft. While, for example, Takamura Toyochika and the craft artists of the Mukei group attempted to create new crafts which would fit into the modern urban culture of the middle class, and Kusube Yaichi and the potters of Sekidosha created their craft as a means of individual expression, Leach and Tomimoto, followed by Hamada and Kawai, took their inspiration from the varied styles of folk crafts, both Western and Japanese. Yanagi took part in the group as a connoisseur and critic. Two important contributions by Yanagi in this context were the discovery of the wood carvings of Buddha's image by Mokujiki Shônin and the re-evaluation of the Korean ceramics of the Choson (Yi dynasty) period both of which deeply stimulated the group. The craft artists of the original group (Leach, Tomimoto, Hamada and Kawai), who learned from their study of ordinary crafts and

incorporated this knowledge in their work, contributed to Yanagi's interpretation of folk crafts in their capacity as creative artists.

The craft artists who subsequently joined the movement were in a different environment from the early members. They were subjected to the strong influence of Yanagi's ethical and aesthetic values, particularly after the forming of Yanagi's theory as it appeared in *The Way of Craft* in 1927. As a result, they were confronted by a serious dilemma of being conscious artists within a group which held that consciousness could not surpass unconsciousness in the creation of beauty. Yanagi, of course, was aware of this dilemma and resorted to the idea of the guild system in which, he believed, individuality would be checked. The Kamigamo Mingei Cooperative was formed in 1927 as a result, but it was dissolved after two-and-a-half years, while Yanagi was overseas, in 1929. When Yanagi returned from his two-year overseas trip in 1930, planning for the publication of a craft magazine was under way (see Chapter Four). Concurrent with the publication of the magazine *Kôgei*, the first local revival movement began in Tottori, then in Shimane.

In order to identify the dilemma of the craft artists of the movement, it is necessary to examine some concepts used by Yanagi in his discussion which are fundamental to his arguments. Their exact meanings, however, have somewhat been taken for granted. They are: 'beauty' and

'direct perception'; the definition of craft; and craft artists and their work. The case of two craft artists and one print artist will illustrate the prewar Mingei movement as a modern craft movement: Kuroda Tatsuaki (wood/lacquer, 1904-1982); Serizawa Keisuke (textiles, 1895-1984); and Munakata Shikô (printmaking, 1903-1975). The artists are chosen, firstly, because they all belonged to the 'second generation' of the craft artists of the Mingei movement; secondly, because they made significant contributions to the development of modern craft and printmaking in Japan; and thirdly because they worked in other areas than ceramics, thus expanding the scope of the movement.

6-1. Beauty and direct perception

In *The Way of Craft*, in which he establishes his Mingei theory, Yanagi does not define beauty, but treats it as synonymous with truth: 'Beauty is one but there are two ways to attain the capital of beauty.'[1] However, because Yanagi's entire theory revolves around the notion of 'beauty', one needs to examine this concept a little more specifically. A good point of entry is an earlier piece of writing entitled 'Seven Rules for Vessels' (*Kibutsu Nanasoku*). It was written with the preceding section, 'Instructions to Craftspeople' (*Kôjin Mei*), in January 1927, a few months before the first article of the series

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1. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, p.68.

The Way of Craft appeared.[2] As the title suggests, the 'Instructions' consist of thirty-four maxims for the craftmaker, and the 'Seven Rules' analyses activities of craft appreciation: seeing, purchasing, collecting, showing, using, enjoying and learning. On 'seeing', Yanagi writes:

> Seeing is appreciating, or appreciating directly. There is no deeper or more correct understanding than [through] direct perception... One who cannot see directly, does not see at all. The recognition of beauty allows no hesitation, as with faith [in religion]... To see, however, is not to view objects in the outside world, but that objects dwell within the mind of one who sees. It is not that one sees objects which exist, but that objects exist because one sees them. The beauty of an object, therefore, is direct perception. To appreciate is to create. Good appreciation is good creativity. If recognition lacks creativity, it cannot be called direct perception... The eyes see the outside world, but the spirit appreciates the existence. One who truly sees beauty creates beauty. It can be said that a beautiful vessel is a vessel created by one who sees.[3]

Here, Yanagi clearly defines beauty as the perception of the individual 'who sees it'. This is the voice of Yanagi the critic and connoisseur, which was shared by the connoisseurs of the group (see Chapter Five). Then Yanagi goes a little further. He endeavours to transcend personal perception. After the seven activities are explained, Yanagi adds that:

> To enter [the domain of] beauty and still be concerned with beauty is yet to understand beauty. If one is able to fully appreciate beauty, one should

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2. Yoshida Kôjirô discovered the first version of the 'Instructions' in 1978 (without the 'Seven Rules' and dated 27 December 1926). It seems that this earlier version of the 'Instructions' was written on its own, and the 'Seven Rules' was added when it was revised in January 1927.
3. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, p.39.

be able to become oblivious to it.[4]

It may be that the first passage quoted above indicates Yanagi's analytical perception of beauty, and the second passage his ideal state of mind. It is intriguing that the set of the articles 'Instructions to Craftspeople; Seven Rules for Vessels' was never published during Yanagi's lifetime, but was posthumously published in *The Mingei* in 1968. At any rate, both passages focus on individual perception, and are in conflict with the concept of beauty in *The Way of Craft* as an absolute truth, independent of the individual mind.

The two levels of discussion of beauty are both present in his writings by 1927. The concept of beauty as an absolute can be traced back to 'Getemono-no Bi', Yanagi's first article on the subject of ordinary wares, published in September 1926.[5] The concept of beauty as personal perception, on the other hand, can be traced to 'The Beauty of Ceramics' (*Tôjiki-no Bi*), Yanagi's first essay on the beauty of craft, written late in 1920 and published in January 1921. The actual ceramics on which this essay was based were Korean porcelain and the works of Leach and Tomimoto. In this early essay Yanagi's perception is more spontaneously and candidly expressed than in his later writings. In 'The Beauty of Ceramics', he praises the colours of white porcelain and celadon:

> To me they are the ultimate colours in porcelain. My next preference are the black colour of *tenmoku* and

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4. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, p.44.
5. See Chapter Five.

> the red of *kaki*. These simple and modest shades of colour are the most astonishing donors of beauty.[6]

He is obviously more modest in expressing his emotions in this encounter with beautiful objects, and does not assume the role of a universal judge on beauty when he says 'to me they are the ultimate' or 'my next preference'. And he concludes:

> Simplicity, or straightforwardness, that is the secret of beauty.[7]

It is Yanagi who makes the judgement here that simplicity or a straightforwardness is 'the secret of beauty', that is, beauty as he perceives it. But the use of the word 'beauty' in this second sentence is ambiguous: when read in the context, 'beauty' clearly refers to Yanagi's personal opinion, but when separated from the previous passage, it can also mean that he is speaking of the universal characteristics of the beauty of craft, which he later did. In this sense, 'The Beauty of Ceramics' embraces both notions of beauty. Was Yanagi thinking of beauty at two different levels simultaneously? Did he decide to suppress one in order to advocate the other?[8] However strongly Yanagi tries to claim that beauty is an absolute truth, the above passage undeniably shows that his idea of 'beauty' is in fact his personal preference,

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6. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.12, p.11.
7. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.12, p.23.
8. The concept of beauty as individual perception was not suppressed altogether. It inconspicuously emerges in some of Yanagi's later discussions. See, for example, 'Sadô-no Kudoku' (Good and Evil in the Tea Ceremony), 1942, *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.17, p.246.

or 'taste'.[9] Yanagi was obviously aware of this, and tried to bring the two separate concepts together, or, more precisely, tried to give his personal aesthetic judgement a universal authority.

The medium, or notion, that he uses to bridge the two, is 'direct perception'. In the introduction of *The Way of Crafts* Yanagi claims:

> Some may ask what my position is... If a position is one of many, it has no absolute value but only a relative one. It may insist on certain rights, but cannot have an authority. However, without authority, how can truth be absolute?[10]

Because he is speaking for truth, Yanagi says, his position has to be an absolute one, 'a position beyond positions'. Then, what makes his position a 'position beyond positions'? According to Yanagi, it is 'direct perception' (*chokkan*).

> If there can be an essential foundation in my view, it cannot come from anything other than *chokkan*... *Chokkan* has no subjectivity such as 'my *chokkan*'. Because the 'self' does not come into view, it is possible to see an object directly. *Chokkan* is '*chokkan* without self'. There is no room for self in *chokkan*. I must set my discussion on this foundation. Nay, whether it is fortunate or unfortunate, I know no other way of seeing [objects] than by *chokkan*.[11]

So, Yanagi introduces the notion of 'direct perception' as

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9. Although some of Yanagi's opponents, such as Kitaôji Rosanjin, had implied that what he called 'beauty' was in fact his personal taste, Idekawa Naoki was the first to analyse the issue critically (see *Mingei: Riron-no Hôkai-to Yôshiki-no Tanjô*, Shinchôsha, 1985, pp.104-114). Idekawa's analysis is convincing, as it explains Yanagi's position in his own thesis.
10. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, p.67.
11. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, p.68.

a trans-personal and therefore universal experience. But the concept of 'direct perception', like that of 'beauty', is slightly different in the earlier 'Seven Rules for Vessels'. In the earlier passage quoted above it is described as an act of appreciating objects themselves directly (i.e. without preconceived knowledge about or opinion on the object), therefore establishing a personal relationship with the object. Because the relationship is a personal one between the viewer and the object, it is creation. In the above passage, however, Yanagi claims that because the direct perception is of universal character, his personal taste can assume 'authority' and he can speak in the name of universal 'beauty'. The crucial jump in the definition of 'direct perception', from personal to trans-personal, is not explained. It only shows that Yanagi had become confident enough during this period to speak of universal beauty through his own perception.

Yanagi's confidence in his own aesthetic judgement was based on the fact that, at the time he wrote *The Way of Craft*, he had exhibited his selection of Choson wares and discovered the Mokujiki carvings. These activities had won recognition among the intellectuals and connoisseurs. The continuous dialogue with artists around *Shirakaba*, including theoreticians such as Kishida Ryûsei, Bernard Leach and Tomimoto Kenkichi, must have strengthened his confidence. As suggested in the previous chapter, however, Yanagi's connoisseurship was confined to certain

genres of art and craft. Yanagi's taste was largely for simple, unassuming and intimate items, and it was in this area that he won his reputation as a connoisseur. But, if beauty is fundamentally a personal perception (as Yanagi himself says), it follows that the concept of 'direct perception without self' is contradictory in itself. It is nothing more than Yanagi's rhetoric, used in an attempt to speak in the name of universal truth.

6-2. Definition of craft

In *The Way of Craft*, Yanagi defines craft as 'belonging to the sphere of functional objects' and adds that the beauty of crafts 'is beauty that is in line with function.'[12] The problem of such a simplistic definition is that it does not define anything unless, at least, the word 'function' is also defined. A teapot for the aristocrat, for instance, has different functions from a teapot for the peasant. What, then, did Yanagi have in mind when referring to craft (and the beauty of it)? The key is again found in 'The Beauty of Ceramics':

> The beauty of ceramics is the beauty of 'intimacy'... One may choose whatever one likes as one's own vessel... Does [the vessel] not have a beautiful appearance? And its beauty comes from the beauty of [its] mind, does it not?... Where could one find a ceramic vessel which is unable to love? If it cannot love, it must be because it was made by cold hands or is looked at with cold eyes.[13]

Here Yanagi sees ceramics as 'intimate', and makes the word 'ceramics' interchangeable with 'vessel'. From this,

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12. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, p.209.
13. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.12, p.5.

it is clear that Yanagi speaks of ceramics with a particular kind of ceramics in mind - that is, crockery, which is used for everyday family meals in the middle class and below, especially the rice bowls which are usually personalised. In other words, from the outset, his concept of ceramics is already graded on the basis of his preference for everyday wares over any other kind of ceramics. The same can be said of his definition of 'craft':

> Beauty is one but there are two paths to reach the capital of beauty. One is called *bijutsu* (Fine Art) and the other *kôgei* (Craft) [words in parentheses originally in English]. Up until today, however, the standard of beauty has been discussed only in terms of fine arts. As a result, craft has been degraded into a lower position and its significance forgotten.[14]

Having thus separated art and craft, he criticises the contemporary practice which he perceives to be trying to 'find art in craft', and urges people to return to craft as it is, by returning 'to the old wares'.[15] What he calls 'craft as it is' and 'the old wares' is already defined according to his taste, although he does not say so. In other words, while purporting to speak for craft in general, Yanagi is positioning himself against both craft art (the New Craft of the Taishô and early Shôwa periods) and art craft (the decorative craft of the Meiji period). From Yanagi's position (despite his notion of himself as being in the 'position above positions'), they are disqualified as craft from the outset.

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14. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, p.68.
15. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, pp.93-94.

The craft section in Teiten, the government-sponsored annual exhibition, was established in 1927, the same year as the publication of *The Way of Craft*, and a preparatory exhibition had been held in the previous year. Naturally, most craftworks exhibited at these exhibitions did not satisfy Yanagi's taste.[16]

> Look at the works of individuals: how little they believe in nature, how strong their ego is, how frustrated they are in expressing themselves. There is no faith, but self-importance. Humility is lost, leaving only arrogance... They create [objects] not to be used, but to be seen.[17]

In this passage Yanagi disapproves of the exhibition crafts on ethical, rather than aesthetic, grounds. Thus individual expression is condemned as arrogance rather than creativity or originality. Tomimoto's attempts to achieve artistic originality, for example, are implicitly dismissed.

Furthermore, Yanagi's ethical and aesthetic judgements are based on a strong bias towards simplicity (or humility in ethical terms) in character, as against individual sophistication or expressiveness in craftwork. Hence he comes to a natural conclusion:

> Works of craft artists are not pure craft but art. In other words, because they are 'craft art', they are impure craft. From the viewpoint of the beauty of craft, the beauty of 'craft art' is inferior to that of pure craft. Pure craft is more beautiful than craft that is made into art.[18]

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16. Yanagi's criticisms on the Teiten crafts were published in the same year (1927).
17. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, p.139.
18. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, p.166.

Whether it is his intention or not, Yanagi's position is clearly expressed: when he speaks of 'pure craft', he refers, by the underlying definition of the words, to what he calls Mingei, the folk-like craft. Any other craft, therefore, is impure in his eyes. Consequently, just as his concept of 'function' was derived from a particular category, family crockery of the middle and lower classes, so what he calls 'the beauty of craft' is in fact his particular taste in craft, which he regards as of the highest standard.

6-3. The Kamigamo Mingei Cooperative

When discussing the works of the craft artists of the movement, it is important to acknowledge that the above definitions of 'beauty', 'craft' and 'function' were all based on Yanagi's personal perception and priorities in values. Having established the values on which his Mingei movement is to be built, Yanagi now says to the craft artist:

> You need to recognise that making ordinary craftworks fits the spirit of craft more than making your own special pieces... You must raise the status of your work to that of ordinary wares.[19]

In the 'Instructions to Craftspeople', Yanagi lists what he expects from the craft artist. It should be noted that at this stage he is only thinking of individual craft artists and not artisans, such as those in Tottori who would join the movement later. The fact that Yanagi

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19. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, p.99.

refrained from publishing the essay suggests that this list was written only for specific individuals whom he knew intimately. Even so, the content is striking in its moral and religious overtones. For example, they include:

Produce with a spirit of service in your heart.

Do not produce to win fame.

Produce with gratitude.

Seek to return to nothingness.

Products should be calm in character.

A product is your confession.

Products should be modest.

Making ordinary products never leads you astray.

Unconsciousness is the basis of beauty.

To produce a vessel is to reproduce yourself.

If the mind is impure, so will your vessel be.

Keep your life modest and simple.[20]

It is not difficult to see that some craft artists, even when they shared Yanagi's taste and ethical beliefs, could not conform to his image of the ideal craftsman or subject themselves to his ethical and aesthetic idealism. Kusube Yaichi was one such artist. Kusube, despite the fact that he was once closely associated with Yanagi, saw Yanagi's

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20. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, pp.33-38. Each maxim is accompanied by a few explanatory sentences. The first version (pp.29-32) is similar to the revised version. One of the major changes is a passage in the first version:

'Machinery can be used, but it is bad to be ruled by it: make your hands always the master of machinery.'

It was changed to:

'Value your hands: hands are the best tools given by God. You may use machinery, but it is not good to be ruled by it. People are servants of God, but not servants of machinery.'

ideas as restrictive and chose to go his own way. This contrasted with Kuroda Tatsuaki, who decided to go along with Yanagi and responded to Yanagi's suggestion for a craft cooperative. In this context, one needs to look briefly at the Kamigamo Mingei Cooperative, which was set up in 1927 with Kuroda and Aota Gorô (1898-1935) as the driving force.[21]

Aota Gorô was a son of a noodlemaker in Kôbe. He was apprenticed in a second-hand clothing shop and then worked his way through Dôshisha High School and proceeded to the Economics Department of the Law Faculty in Dôshisha University.[22] Aota belonged to the university painting circle, and was an eager *Shirakaba* reader. In 1922, Aota spent his summer holiday in Tanba (north-west of Kyoto) in order to study rag weaving. After graduating from

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21. Until the 1980s, reference to the Kamigamo Mingei Cooperative was very limited. My main reference material consists of three fairly recent publications: Yoshida Kôjirô, 'Kamigamo Mingei Kyôdan-no Koto' I & II, 'Geppô' *of Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû* vol.8, 1980 & vol.9, 1980; Iuchi Katsue, 'Kuroda Tatsuaki-to Kamigamo Mingei Kyôdan' I & II, *Hokkaidô Art Museum Studies*, 1991 & 1992; *Japanese Aesthetics and Sense of Space: Another Aspect of Modern Japanese Design*, Seson Museum of Art, Tokyo, 1990. Yoshida Kôjirô has done particularly valuable research on Aota Gorô, who became alienated from Yanagi and died young. Iuchi's main interest is Kuroda Tatsuaki, who was invited to Hokkaidô to instruct in woodwork in 1933. The catalogue of an exhibition at Sezon Museum of Art deals with Mikunisô, a Mingei-style model house which Yanagi planned and exhibited at the national exhibition commemorating the enthronement of the Emperor in 1929. The new craftwork displayed in the house (furniture, decoration, crockery and so on) included a large number of pieces made at the Kamigamo Mingei Cooperative.
22. Dôshisha University was (and still is) one of the most prestigous private universities in the Kansai (central Japan) area.

university in 1923, he took up a teaching position at his old high school. Around this time, Aota saw Kawai Kanjirô's exhibition. He was deeply moved by Kawai's ceramics and eventually made his acquaintance. It was through Kawai that he met Yanagi, who engaged Aota as his eldest son's private tutor. Kuroda Tatsuaki, who also met Yanagi through Kawai, recalls:

> For about two years before we formed the Kamigamo Cooperative, three times each week either at Master Yanagi's house in Kaguraoka or Master Kawai's, even on rainy days and windy nights, four of us (including Aota Gorô, who did textiles) endlessly discussed Mingei.[23]

Kuroda Tatsuaki was a son of a *nushi*, a woodwork craftsman who produced the wood and lacquer base for the *maki-e* artist.[24] The family were descendants of the samurai class, which was reflected in the manners taught in the family.[25] This family background perhaps had some influence on Kuroda's attitude towards his own life and the intellectual world, despite the low social status of the *nushi*. He wanted to become a painter, but it was not practical to consider making a living by painting, so he

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23. Originally written in 1966, reprinted in *The Mingei*, no.495, 1994, p.4.
24. For Kuroda's biographical details, I referred to: M. Moroyama, 'Personal Chronology', *Kuroda Tatsuaki - Master Wood Craftsman*, exhibition catalogue, Crafts Gallery, the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, 1983; my interview with Kenkichi Kuroda, 17th and 19th May 1993; and the audio recording of Kuroda's talk, at Asahi Hall, Kyoto, 1976, a copy of which was kindly provided by Mr Kenkichi Kuroda. The date of the recording is determined from the reference to 'Serizawa's current show in France'.
25. For example, according to Kuroda Kenkichi (Tatsuaki's son), when Tatsuaki was sixteen, his father taught him the protocol of *seppuku*, or ritual suicide (personal contact made on 17th May 1993).

learned the family business.

When he was about fifteen, his father said that the work of a *nushi* was always an unrewarded labour, as he prepared the ground for the *maki*-e artist who took all the credit for the finished work. On hearing this, Kuroda felt indignant. It was the first of his experience of unfairness in the industry. As part of a generation which considered personal development an important goal in life, he determined to produce complete craftworks on his own. In the wood/lacquer craft industry, this was an act of rebellion in itself.

Around 1921, Kuroda first saw Kawai Kanjirô's work at Sankakudô, the first art gallery of Western-style paintings in Kyoto. Kuroda remembered all his life how deeply Kawai's work moved him. According to him, Kawai was already referred to as 'a living national treasure' who had pioneered a new dimension of beauty in ceramics.[26] In the same year he became acquainted with some young potters, including Kusube Yaichi, who were Kawai's juniors at the Kyoto Research Institute of Ceramics. In 1923, he read some of Tomimoto's writings and learned from them that there were artists in the craft industry. A small anecdote illustrates Kuroda's attitude towards his work. Once when Kuroda held a solo exhibition (his first solo exhibition was in 1935), his older brother said he felt embarrassed that Kuroda was exhibiting what in his eyes

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26. *The Mingei*, no.495, 1994, pp.2-3.

were 'toys'. Kuroda's answer to this was, 'Skills can be measured by a ruler, but expression cannot be measured.'[27]

Through Kawai, Kuroda met Aota Gorô. Hamada Shôji was another 'great master' for Kuroda,[28] but Hamada stayed only briefly in Kyoto, in 1924, while Kawai was available for their regular contact. Kawai's interest in people and Zen must also have helped to drew the two inspired young men to him. In this background piece, Kuroda's account of his feeling towards Yanagi is revealing:

> I first met Mr Yanagi at Mr Kawai's house. At that time, the only knowledge I had of Mr Yanagi was from the exhibition of Mokujiki Shônin [carvings]. I could not ignore Mr Yanagi, however, because he was someone in whom Mr Kawai Kanjirô, my great predecessor whom I respected with great awe both as a craft artist and as a human being, had a complete trust.[29]

One is inclined to think that, a non-practitioner such as Yanagi - however impressive his argument and his collection of old wares - would not have had so great an influence on the two young craft producers if it were not for Kawai's recommendation. In the event, though, the four craft artists of the original Mingei group not only helped Yanagi develop his Mingei theory, but also helped to promote Yanagi's ideas through their influence as practitioners.

When Yanagi, Tomimoto, Hamada and Kawai drew up the 'Prospectus of the Establishment of a Japan Folk Art

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27. From Kenkichi Kuroda, interviewed on 17th May 1993.
28. Recorded talk by Kuroda.
29. *The Mingei*, no.495, 1994, p.7.

Gallery' in 1926, Aota and Kuroda were also involved in the project: Aota wove cloth for the illustrations, and Kuroda engraved the plate for printing the title on the front cover. So, when Yanagi wrote the proposal for a craft cooperative, privately printed in 30 copies in February 1927, he clearly had Aota and Kuroda in mind.[30] Copy no.2 was presented by Yanagi to Aota Gorô. How, then, did the proposal fit into Yanagi's overall argument at the time?

Yanagi presents the idea of cooperation on the basis that:

> We have eaten the fruit of knowledge, and today is an age of recognition... The pleasure to recognise beauty is given to us... But while we are blessed with the ability to recognise the beauty of old wares, we are assigned to create new work at the same time.[31]

From there, Yanagi proceeds to explain the dilemma they face:

> (1) We create after learning beauty.
> (2) We create as craft artists.
>
> But these two facts contradict the characteristics of correct old wares.
>
> (1) They were created before learning beauty.
> (2) They were not works of individuals but of the people.
>
> ... Let us put the problem simply as follows: 'How can we, learned individual craft artists, create natural and innocent beauty as found in those old wares?'[32]

In Yanagi's view, there are three ways to overcome the

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30. Yanagi wrote, at the end of the Proposal, 'I began writing this small passage to present to a few close friends (*Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, p.57).'
31. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, pp.47-48.
32. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, p.48.

dilemma: Discipline, Surrender and Communion.[33] Discipline is achieved by self-reflection, Surrender by faith in the power without, and Communion by cooperation.

> Illness tends to prevail in individual work sprung from individual life... True craft is not individualistic art or *Individual Art* [italics in English]. When craft rises as is happening today, therefore, by some enlightened individuals forming themselves into a cooperative, it may open a path [for the enlightened craft artists] to break away from the evils of individualism. The more one insists on oneself, the more one becomes restricted. Liberation of self can only be achieved by breaking away from self. Cooperation, therefore, is not a denial of self. A guild can only be established on mutual respect. The fundamental rule of guilds in the Middle Ages was mutual love by which individual freedom and equality were guarded.[34]

The cooperative, according to Yanagi, will be bonded by its members' faith in 'correct' beauty. He has arrived at this conclusion through 'accumulated learning, exchanging thoughts and long-time experience' between him and his friends, and this led them to believe that their view on beauty is a correct one. In addition, the fact that the members met at the particular time and became close friends seemed to urge them to action - to form a cooperative for the shared purpose of creating beautiful objects. Yanagi's description of a cooperative (or communion) here is very idealistic, which makes one wonder how it was perceived by Kuroda and Aota, the two main members of the cooperative.

Unfortunately, Aota did not speak of his experience in the Kamigamo Cooperative in the reminder of his short life

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33. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, p.50.
34. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.8, p.52.

which ended only six years after the cooperative broke up. But according to Kuroda, the story of the beginning of Kamigamo Craft Cooperative was as follows: during the two years of constant talk on craft and exchanging ideas on the future of craft, he and Aota became impatient for some kind of action. Yanagi instigated them to form a cooperative, as they were the only possible candidates for it. Other 'great masters' such as Kawai, Hamada and Tomimoto had established their own workshop and kiln. As far as the practical plans of organisation were concerned, they had no idea of how to run a cooperative. There was no model on which to shape their cooperative, except that they heard from some visitors to Yanagi's house of some remote pottery communities existing in Kyûshû. During an expedition searching for a site of a museum to house their collection, they found a house which belonged to a shrine, with a sign 'to let'. Yanagi said to Kuroda and Aota, 'You rent it.'[35]

So the Kamigamo Mingei Cooperative took off in 1927, with Kuroda practically the only full-time, fully trained producer. Aota was teaching at the high school and thus contributed a regular income to the cooperative. Suzuki Minoru, still a student at Dôshisha University, joined as an assistant in dyeing and book-keeping for the cooperative. Later Aota's younger brother Shichirô also joined, doing metalwork.

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35. Recorded talk by Kuroda.

The cooperative received various forms of support from the members of the Mingei group and its supporters. It enjoyed warm support from Iwai Taketoshi, the chief of the Kyoto Bureau of the *Osaka Mainichi Shinbun* (newspaper), who not only publicised the cooperative and its efforts in the newspaper, but also organised an advance purchase scheme for the cooperative's products. The cooperative, as Yoshida Kôjirô suggests, was far from a commercially viable venture.[36] The only regular income was Aota's salary. For him, it seems, the cooperative was a major decision in his life - he had been adopted into his wife's family, but before starting the cooperative, he had divorced her and returned to his previous surname. Kuroda, too, left his aged father and his older brother who had been suffering from illness for seventeen years, and against the wishes of many people around him. Kuroda recalls that they were particularly poor during the first year.

During its short lifetime, the Kamigamo Mingei Cooperative had three major achievements: the furnishing of Mikuni-sô, the Mingei-style house exhibited at the national exhibition in 1928; participating in the Japan Mingei Exhibition held in Kyoto in March 1929; and an exhibition called 'Works by the Mingei Cooperative', held in June 1929 while Yanagi was overseas. The house only later became known as Mikuni-sô; originally it was called

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36. Yoshida, 'Kamigamo Mingei Kyôdan-no koto', *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, 'Geppô', no.2, 1980, p.12.

Mingeikan (Mingei gallery), and was built and decorated with major support from Yamamoto Tamesaburô, the president of Asahi Beer. The house was planned by the Mingei group and decorated with their collection of old wares and works of their own.[Fig.57] Kuroda contributed mostly wooden furniture (tables, chairs and bookcases) and Aota floor rugs.[37][Figs.58-9] The house was bought by Yamamoto after the exhibition and moved to Mikuni, his residence.

The Japan Mingei Exhibition included the group's collection and new works. The exhibition was held over three days and received 1,500 visitors.[38] While this exhibition was a joint effort with the established craft artists of the group, the third exhibition was the first solo show of the cooperative. During its two days, over 2,000 people visited it and most items were sold. As an exhibition by young craftsmen who took inspiration from old, ordinary wares, it apparently attracted the attention of critics, no doubt with some encouragement from Iwai. The critics described the cooperative variously as a cultural movement, a revival or an industrial movement.[39]

Despite the success of the exhibition, the cooperative dissolved in autumn 1929, only a few months after its successful solo exhibition. Kuroda declined to speak of

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37. For the planning and details of the craftworks, see *The Japanese Aesthetics and Sense of Space*, Saizon Museum of Art, Tokyo, 1990.
38. Yoshida, *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, 'Geppô', no.2, 1980, p.11.
39. Yoshida, *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, 'Geppô', no.2, 1980, p.11.

the circumstances of the breakup, except to mention the lack of membership, financial hardships and his own mental and physical exhaustion.[40] The only direct reference to it came out in an interview with Yanagi Kaneko, Sôetsu's widow, in which she confirmed to Mizuo Hiroshi that one of the incidents which led to the collapse of the group was a love affair involving Aota Gorô.[41]

Yanagi also refers to the 'failure' of the cooperative and describes it as having suffered an ethical defeat.[42] It seems that, because Yanagi thus washed his hands, little effort had been made even among the 'official' Mingei historians to evaluate the achievements and failures of the cooperative, which would necessarily have led to a re-examination of Yanagi's positions. As a result, the failure of the cooperative had been attributed to the lack of planning on the part of the young participants and

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40. Suzuki Minoru, one of the initial members who mainly managed the cooperative, left it on his graduation from university to work for Asahi Beer Co.
41. According to Mrs Yanagi, a female student from Dôshisha University who was in love with Aota began helping the cooperative. She was from a wealthy family, and concerned teaching staff from Dôshisha contacted Mrs Yanagi (Yanagi was in the United States at the time), who intervened and took the girl back to her parents. See *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, 'Geppô', no.19, 1982, p.6.
42. 'Mingeikan-no Seiritsu', *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû* vol.16, p.50.

Aota's immoral conduct.[43] Yoshida Kôjirô was the first to question this conventional treatment of an important experiment within the history of the movement:

> Aota's conduct may well have been part of the cause of the dissolution of the movement, but I am one who thinks that the real problem lay in Yanagi's ideas on the cooperative itself: although to a certain extent it was valuable as a tentative proposal, it connoted a rejection of the real world when put into practice at that particular time in history, and that rejection became manifest with the success of the exhibition... Because [the cooperation] terminated after only two-and-a-half years, Yanagi managed to escape with only a small scar, and, by blaming Aota alone for the failure, he could reduce the blame on [himself as] the leader.[44]

In the light of Yoshida's remarks, one may pause to question Yanagi's role in the establishment, work and dissolution of the Kamigamo Mingei Cooperative.

Although it is generally thought that the cooperative was set up by the young men in response to Yanagi's 'A Proposal for Craft Cooperative', closer investigation is necessary to establish the extent of Yanagi's initiative in the plan. One must rely solely on Kuroda's account, which is the only available information from the participants in the cooperative. As quoted above, Kuroda and Aota had meetings with Yanagi and Kawai three days a

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43. For instance, Mizuo Hiroshi refers to the interview with Kaneko and writes: 'At any rate, the running of a cooperative would obviously require strongly united minds and careful planning. It seems that the defects which the cooperative had embraced, namely recklessness in planning and unreasonable strain, surfaced at the time Yanagi was away (*Hyôden Yanagi Sôetsu*, pp.174-5)'. Mizuo clearly wants to leave the problem at that, rather than questioning Yanagi's original ideas.
44. Yoshida, *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, 'Geppô', no.2, 1980, p.12.

week for two years before they established the cooperative.[45] The period covers the coining of the word *mingei* and the writing up of the 'Prospectus of the Japan Folkcraft Gallery' by the original group of connoisseurs and craft artists. It was also during this time that Yanagi's religious aesthetic developed. Kuroda says that it took the two years to see objects and learn about them. He joined Yanagi and Kawai in their hunting for objects at morning markets around Kyoto, and no doubt filled them in with his knowledge of woodwork. Kuroda also mentions that during the two years they also discussed the possibility of a cooperative, and Yanagi instigated the two men to start one. This suggests that the idea of a cooperative, although it may have originated in Yanagi, had been discussed among the four men. Kuroda says:

> We [he and Aota] were young and impatient for action. Mr Yanagi was also looking into the future and had a passion for the idea of creating a cooperative and a gallery... We thought, if we were going to do something seriously, we should live together.[46]

In this context, although Yanagi had developed the idea of a cooperative as a result of his search for a new production system, the actual planning was more a result of Yanagi's and Kawai's discussion with Kuroda and Aota. In other words, it was not that the two young men responded without much thought to the elaborate religious-aesthetic discourse of Yanagi's 'A Proposal for a Craft

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45. Kuroda first met Kawai in autumn 1924. He was later introduced to Aota, who was also visiting Kawai. It is likely that it took a little time before they met Yanagi, then Aota's tutoring arrangement for Yanagi's son was made, and thus their regular meetings began.
46. Recorded talk by Kuroda.

Cooperative', but that, as Yanagî himself writes, the possibility of an actual cooperative and its theory developed side by side.[47]

As Kuroda emphasises in his recorded talk, Yanagi was already forty years old and established, while Kuroda and Aota were only around twenty and their future plans were uncertain.[48] This significant difference in age between the mentors and their students within the group might, aside from its intellectual structure, have played a large part in the extent of Yanagi's influence on the young men. If so, they would have expected good support for the cooperative from Yanagi in return. It is intriguing, therefore, that while Kuroda speaks of the warm and comprehensive support from Kawai Kanjirô and Iwai Taketoshi, Yanagi's name is not mentioned.[49] In this context, Kuroda's perception of the early stages of the movement also requires some attention. In the recorded talk he stresses that the appreciation of ordinary wares

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47. Nakami Shinri, assistant professor at Seisen Women's University, holds that Yanagi's idea of a cooperative was strongly influenced by Kropotkin (Russian aristocrat and anarchist, 1842-1921), who had a wide influence on Japanese anarchists and liberal intellectuals, and whose *Mutual Aid* Yanagi read late in 1909. Nakami also points out that Yanagi had just read two books by Arthur J. Penty (guild socialist). See 'Yanagi Sôetsu, Kropotkin and Guild Socialism 1-4', published lecture, *The Mingei* nos.489, 491-3, Nihon Mingei Kyôkai, 1993.
48. Yanagi was in fact 38 years old in 1927, but according to the pre-war calculation with which one is one year old at birth and adds a year to one's age at every subsequent new year, Yanagi (born in March) was approaching forty. Kawai was one year younger than Yanagi.
49. *The Mingei*, no.495, 1994, p.8.

was an emerging general interest at the time.[50] For Kuroda, Yanagi was not the one who first discovered the beauty of ordinary crafts, but one who recognised them, deeply loved them and understood them. It may be added that he was also well equipped with Western and Eastern learning to argue for them.

How, then, did Yanagi's ideas relate to the works produced at the Kamigamo Mingei Cooperative? Its first major project, the decoration of Mikuni-sô, was strictly supervised by Yanagi, so that its products would harmonise with the overall scheme of the house which also contained Yanagi's selection of old wares and ceramics by Tomimoto, Leach, Hamada and Kawai. Yanagi was responsible for the design of the house and the arrangement of funiture and decoration, and he knew what he wanted: the house was designed and its interior arranged by the Mingei group, but it is not difficult to imagine that each part of the house was arranged strictly according to Yanagi's taste. Yamamoto Tamesaburô, who financed the construction on the condition that the house be moved to his property at the end of the exhibition, did not interfere in its creation.[51] Each work had to satisfy the high expectations which Yanagi set for the producers. In other

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50. He recalls in the recorded talk, for instance, that some years before he even met Yanagi, he was attracted to an old *sake* bottle (old Imari ware) from the riverbed and brought it home as a decoration.
51. 'Mikuni-sô Shôshi', *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.16, pp.26-27. Photographs of its interior were also published in *The Japanese Aesthetics and the Sense of Space* catalogue.

words, Yanagi's role in relation to the producers who worked on the Mikuni-sô project was that of a designer/connoisseur. And one may suggest, that Yanagi's overall role in the Kamigamo Mingei Cooperative was also that of a connoisseur who critically assessed its products and encouraged their makers, rather than that of a leader who oversaw the running of the cooperative and the lives of its members.

The details of the dissolution of the cooperative will never be known, as Aota died in 1935, Suzuki Minoru left it several months before the dissolution, and Kuroda Tatsuaki, who died in 1982, never spoke of the exact circumstances of its closure. Yanagi was deeply disappointed to see the cooperative had failed:

> If the cooperative had continued to this day, it would have left great works. But we failed miserably. More than anything, we were morally unprepared. Not by work nor by finance, but by morality it ended its life. At the height of its work, it was unexpectedly damaged. Instead, we learned a great deal from this. This happened while I was overseas.[52]

One may pose a question at this point: was the Kamigamo Mingei Cooperative a 'failure'? To call it a 'failure' implies that the purpose of the cooperative was not achieved. If the purpose was to prove that the cooperative system would work, and thus contribute to changing the existing craft industry, then it clearly failed to achieve its aim. As Yoshida Kôjirô suggests

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52. 'Mingei-kan no Seiritsu' (1935) in *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.16, p.50.

(see above), perhaps the success of the exhibition brought out the personal differences in the participants who were living together, sharing aspects of life other than work. Perhaps, also, Aota's leadership in work was inadvertently extended to other part of everyday living. Problems of a personal nature are often not evident when people have to cooperate to achieve a difficult common aim, but they tend to emerge when the major difficulty has been overcome. If this was the case with the Kamigamo Cooperative, Yanagi's role ought to have been to learn from the experience and to search for a workable system, rather than blaming an individual for not acting as his ideal cooperative member.

If one looks at its achievements in terms of work, however, it may be seen as a success, and its dissolution as a move on to the next stage of the craft movement. The two craft artists - Aota and Kuroda - both developed their skills through working together on the three major projects. After the dissolution of the cooperative, Aota remained in Kamigamo and continued to work in a textile workshop with some co-workers. He called the work the 'Kamigamo Weaving' and published a small book, *Kamigamo-ori no Gainen* (The Concept of the Kamigamo Weaving), in 1934. The book was produced as a result of his ten years' research and practice in weaving and vegetable dyeing methods.[53] He refers to the period leading to the Kamigamo Cooperative:

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53. I am thankful to Mr Odani Jirô for kindly lending me his copy of the book.

> I opened my eyes for craft through the *getemono* movement. I threw myself wholeheartedly into the movement (which is also over ten years old now) and followed the *getemono* expedition everywhere, sometimes even neglecting my job (I was a high school teacher). Eventually, we formed a cooperative to produce woodwork, metalwork, textiles and lacquerware. I solely concentrated on textiles.[54]

Neither the term *mingei* nor the name Yanagi is present in his book. Furthermore, his belief in work is expressed earlier in the book:

> Others will decide what kind of textiles are beautiful according to their taste. My duty here is to talk about correct textiles.[55]

This comment indirectly criticises Yanagi's preoccupation with 'beauty', i.e., his taste. One may further read between the lines that Aota is here keeping his distance from Yanagi, probably because of his discontent with the master, who had banished him because of his private affairs rather than because of his work.[56] Aota died of tuberculosis one year after he published the book.

Kuroda Tatsuaki, although he suffered from physical and mental stress towards the end of the cooperative, continued to create his unique style of wood/lacquerwork, to become one of the most outstanding woodwork artists in modern Japan.[Fig.60]

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54. *Kamigamo-ori no Gainen*, Minatoya, Tokyo, 1934, p.40.
55. *Kamigamo-ori no Gainen*, p.4.
56. Adachi Jirô, who became Aota's assistant after the dissolusion of the cooperative, heard Aota say, 'We were united through our work, yet [Yanagi] did not judge me by my work but intruded on my private matters such as my love affair or problems with my assistant.' 'Mingei-no Aota-to iu Hito', *Kyoto Mingei Dayori* (Kyoto Mingei News), no.19, 1981, p.21.

To describe the Kamigamo Mingei Cooperative as a failure would be to undervalue its achievements and, as Yoshida Kôjirô suggested, to divert attention from the unrealistic nature of Yanagi's expectations of the members of the cooperative. Yanagi had expected that the members would unite in their faith in beauty and live with mutual love, while he was not prepared to share such a life himself. The dissolution only proved that Yanagi's theory of a cooperative was unrealistic as a guide for creative individuals with human desires. What, then, did Yanagi's theory mean to the creative craft artists of the Mingei movement? The case of the following three major craft artists may provide some keys to the answer.

6-4. Kuroda Tatsuaki

Kuroda was dissatisfied with the contemporary practice of division of labour in wood/lacquerwork production and wanted to do the entire process on his own. This was a common enough goal in ceramics production, but it was a rather unusual decision for the son of a *nushi*, and Kuroda was almost alone in his pursuit. Kuroda himself seems to attribute his rebellious decision to the spirit of the age: he describes the Taishô era as the time when *Shirakaba*-style humanism and Marxism were the two main cultural currents which captured the minds of young people, either consciously or unconsciously.[57] Kuroda read Tomimoto Kenkichi's 'Yôhen Zakki', a collection of

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57. Recorded talk by Kuroda.

essays published in 1923, which strongly inspired him.

Kuroda's work has a distinct quality, which is often described as 'demonic'.[58] Simplicity and solidity are the main characteristics of his work, with an emphasis on the nature and strength of wood. Even in his inlayed (*raden*) objects, which he was making from the early years of his career, one notices his unconventional treatment of the shell fragments in his design: the fragments are larger than those in the usual inlayed works, and are used in the Greenbergian sense 'to draw attention to art', rather than to conceal art.[Fig.61] The same can be said of his wood carvings. The simple, articulate patterns, cut deeply into the surface of the wood with chisel and knife, bring out the characteristics of the material. Kuroda often spoke of wood as a living material and stressed the importance of knowing 'what the wood wants' when handling it.[59] His preference for geometric patterns such as the Buddhist swastika rather than figurative designs may have come from the fact that figurative designs tend to draw attention away from the material, to what it represents. This may explain his dislike of *maki*-e, even though he did learn the technique.

The fact that Kuroda drew inspiration from old Korean folk

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58. For example, see Hida Toyojirô 'Guri in Modern Times', *Kuroda Tatsuaki* (exhibition cataloque), The National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo, 1983 (no page nos).
59. For example, in the TV documentary *Mokkô* [woodcraftsman] Kuroda Tatsuaki, Mainichi TV, 1970. I am grateful to Mr Kuroda Kenkichi for showing me the recorded program.

furniture is well known. Asagawa Takumi, Yanagi's close friend and a Korean craft expert, published a book called *Korean Tables* (Chôsen-no Zen) in 1929, and it is documented that Kuroda had a copy of it. Hida Toyojirô even uses the fact to make the point that Kuroda's work is based on oriental spirituality and concludes:

> [original in English] Kuroda never studied the Korean woodcrafts through the principles and thoughts of the West.[60]

Hida's conclusion may be too hasty, however. It may be that, Kuroda did not study any woodcraft through the principles or thought he drew from the West. There are good grounds to argue that Kuroda's perception, particularly in the prewar years, was based on a kind of romanticism and nostalgia of that period - the same kind that inspired the craft artists senior to him in the Mingei movement. One instance which shows this is his passionate interest in chairs. Chairs, of course, were never part of ordinary Japanese furniture until the Meiji period. But because they are common furniture in the West, in a way they symbolised Western-style living, and they attracted the interest of the young artists. Tomimoto's two-part article 'Isu-no Hanash (iOn Chairs)' in the *Bijutsu Shinpô* in 1912 can also be seen in this

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60. Hida Toyojirô 'Guri in Modern Times'.

context.[61] Kuroda was inspired by the chair in Van Gogh's painting around the time of the Kamigamo Mingei Cooperative, and tried to make one like that, relying only on the small reproduction of the painting for the design.[62]

Another instance of the Western influence on Kuroda's work is a book of Western furniture, *Das Möbelwerk* by Hermann Schmitz, published in Berlin, with over 600 photographs of furniture from the ancient Egyptian to Greek, Gothic, English, northern European and other areas. The book was given to Kuroda by Yanagi when Kuroda was at the Kamigamo Cooperative.[63] While many of Kuroda's designs can be traced to some of the illustrations in the book, Kuroda's son Kenkichi remembers his father saying that his ideal image of furniture which he always wanted to make was a fifteenth-century Tyrolean bed for a child.[64] The picture shows an old, solid box-style bed with a canopy covering about one-third of the bed. The only decoration, it seems, is a round shape cut into each side panel.

The characteristics of Kuroda's work came, first and

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61. The article is a brief survey of mostly Western chairs, from ancient Egyptian to contemporary British chairs, discussing their forms in relation to their use, accompanied by eighteen photographs, including details, which Tomimoto had taken at the South Kensington Museum as well as during his trip across the Middle East to India (no.11, September, pp.11-16; no.12, October, p.18).
62. Reprint in *The Mingei* no.495, 1994, p.8.
63. This was confirmed by Kuroda's widow during my interview with her son, on 17th May 1993.
64. Interview on 17th May 1993.

foremost, from the sentiment of the age, which began to seek inspiration in traditions originating far from his immediate surroundings. He shared this inspiration and motivation with the members of the Mingei movement. And it seems that it was Yanagi's taste and aesthetic sensitivity, and not his Mingei theory, which contributed to the quality of Kuroda's work. For example, Kuroda saw the lack of a chairmaking tradition in Japan as a challenge, an opportunity for the craft artist to create something.[65] When Kawai Kanjirô died, Kuroda wrote 'Master Kawai was a true artist before people may call him a potter'.[66] In this context, it is revealing that, in the same passage written in memory of Kawai, Kuroda refers to the Mingei movement as 'a brotherhood-like group searching for truth, which later came to be called the 'Mingei movement'.[67]

6-5. Serizawa Keisuke

When seen in the context of the development of the modern craft movements, the early days of Serizawa Keisuke can be best likened to Fujii Tatsukichi (see Chapter Three) in that he worked with a variety of materials and strove to spread the joy of creating beauty in everyday life. But Fujii's life was a constant battle for the recognition of craft as art and against the established values and systems. Serizawa, who was four years younger than Fujii,

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65. Reprint in *The Mingei* no.495, p.9.
66. Reprint in *The Mingei* no.495, p.4.
67. Reprint in *The Mingei* no.495, p.4.

benefited from his forerunner's efforts, and his subsequent encounter with the early Mingei group provided him with support both in ideals and means. This enabled Serizawa to concentrate on his work, rather than having to fight for the recognition of craft as art in a more hostile environment, as Fujii Tatsukichi did.

Serizawa Keisuke was born in 1895, into an affluent merchant Ôishi family.[68] His father was a trader in kimono material in Shizuoka. Keisuke's father and grandfather practised various arts, as well as calligraphy. This environment, the family and the nature of their trade obviously had a strong influence on the development of Keisuke's own artistic taste. From an early age, Keisuke wanted to become a painter and studied design and oil painting. In 1914, he enrolled in the design department of the Tokyo Industrial High School (Hamada was one year his senior in the ceramics department). He eagerly read *Shirakaba*, and was a great fan of the works of the modernist painters such as Yasui Sôtarô and Umehara Ryûzaburô, and particularly Nakagawa Kazumasa and Kishida Ryûsei, the painters around the *Shirakaba* group. He was also attracted to the ceramics by Leach and Tomimoto.

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68. For the facts in Serizawa's life and career, refer to the chronology compiled by Yomoto Takashi in *Serizawa Keisuke-no Sekai*, Bungei Shunjûsha, 1978, pp.175-7. Where dates are inconsistent with other sources, refer to *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû* vol.22-III and Yomoto's later writings in *The Mingei*.

In 1917 he married into the Serizawa family, which did not have a son to succeed to the family name. The Serizawas were also an affluent family, which allowed Keisuke to experiment in various crafts without economic pressure to support his family. He established a small design business with friends and worked at designing posters, decorating shops and so on. He then took a job at the Shizuoka Industrial Testing Centre, where he drew designs for lacquerware, dyeing and woodwork. He submitted his designs to various competitions and won prizes. Through one of these craftworks, he was invited to work in Osaka, for the Osaka Commerce Promotion House. His job was to study and teach design. He resigned from the position one year later in 1922, returned to Shizuoka and spent every day sketching and teaching women in the neighbourhood various home crafts - knitting, embroidery, tie-dyeing and so on.

In 1921 Fujii Tatsukichi joined the magazine *Shufu-no Tomo* (Housewife's Friend) and began to teach the idea and practice of home craft to the general public, which he continued for ten years. One of the activities of his column was to organise a national home craft competition, for which Serizawa submitted a work and won the first grand prize in 1922.

In 1923, Serizawa visited Yamamoto Kanae's Farmers' Art Centre in central Japan. This fact is usually mentioned but not discussed in the context of his life and work,

perhaps because of his subsequent involvement in the Mingei movement and the fact that Yanagi was disdainful of Yamamoto Kanae's efforts to develop hand craft among farmers and called their products Western imitation toys. In the context of Serizawa's career, however, his visit to the Farmers' Art Centre shows his strong interest in developing a design movement among the general public, to bring creativity into everyday life. One may think that, if it was not for his encounter with Yanagi, Serizawa might eventually have joined either Yamamoto or Fujii's activities, or developed his own like theirs.

Serizawa began to collect *e-ma*, the devotional plaque with a painted horse offered to shrines, around 1919. It was through his collection that Serizawa first met Yanagi. He had read Yanagi's *The Way of Craft* in 1925 when it first appeared in *Daichôwa* and was deeply moved by it. He read it on his way to Korea, where he visited the Korean People's Art Museum which Yanagi had founded.

When Yanagi visited Takabayashi, who was an influential man in the Hamamatsu district of Shizuoka and a collector of old clocks, as well as an early supporter of the Mingei movement, Takabayashi took Yanagi to see him Serizawa's collection of *e-ma*. Yanagi was delighted. Thus Serizawa joined the movement primarily as a connoisseur-collector who shared the aesthetics of the group. When Yanagi and the Mingei group created and exhibited the folk-style house (later called Mikuni-sô - see above) at the Domestic

Exhibition Commemorating the Enthronement of the Emperor in 1928, Serizawa was not involved in their display but in the Shizuoka tea industry display. At the *mingei* house in the exhibition, he saw *bingata*, an Okinawan stencil-dyeing, for the first time. The bright and playful *bingata* became his obsession. It was perhaps then that he began to concentrate on dyeing, which until then had been only part of his creative activities. In 1929 Serizawa submitted a batik wall-hanging to the Kokugakai exhibition and won a prize.

When the magazine *Kôgei* was first published in 1931, Yanagi asked Serizawa to design the front cover, which he did for a year, using stencil-dyeing.[Fig.62] This was the beginning of Serizawa's book design, which became one of his major activities alongside textiles. In 1934, Mizutani Ryôichi provided Serizawa and his family with a workshop in Kamata, in Tokyo. This was partly because the family fortune had been lost through a relative's unsuccessful business venture. The workshop was joined by others such as Yanagi Yoshitaka and Okamura Kichiemon, and was called Kamata Cooperative. In 1929, while in America Yanagi met Carl Keller, a renowned collector of *Don Quixote* editions, who asked Yanagi to collect Japanese versions of the story. Yanagi entrusted the task to Jugaku Bunshô, his friend and co-reseacher of Blake and Whitman. Keller asked Jugaku to find a uniquely Japanese image of Don Quixote by a good artist. After much thought into the selection of the artist, Jugaku decided to

to commission Serizawa. The *Ehon Don Kihôte* [Picturebook Don Quixote] is one of Serizawa's major work in book illustration; using a thirteenth-century warrior for the Japanese Don Quixote, it was completed in 1937 after eight years.[Figs.63-4]

In 1939 Serizawa finally went to Okinawa and studied *bingata* from the traditional producers. In his note on *bingata*, he describes the craft 'lively and full of strength', and admires the fact that *bingata* kimonos, even those of higher status (i.e. refined designs made for the higher classes), are 'without the shadiness associated with elaborate works'.[69] From that time, the brightness and cheerfulness of *bingata* became an integral part of his work.[Fig.65] Serizawa's creative craft of stencil-dyeing later won world recognition when he was invited to show his work at the Grand Palais, Paris, in 1976.

The charm of Serizawa's stencil-dyeing lies in its expression, rather than in the craftsmanship. In his *bingata* works, he uses the characteristic brightness and playfulness of the traditional craft. In his more original designs, particularly folding screens and the *noren* (a cloth hanging with slits, used as a partition in the hallway or doorway), a certain strain, which is a characteristic of conscious designs, can be observed.[Fig.66]

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69. '"Katachiki" to "nuihichi"' *Kôgei*, no.100, 1939, reprinted in *The Mingei*, no.478, 1994, pp.2-3.

Perhaps the most important element of his work is that his designs are both decorative and functional. They enhance the product, whether it is a *noren* or a desk calendar, with their simplicity and warmth. Furthermore, they are commercially reproduceable by nature. In other words, Serizawa was a good industrial designer. His attachment to the Mingei movement, it seems, was an important, but not a crucial incident in the development of his career. It was important, because Yanagi's *The Way of Craft* obviously gave him strong moral support in his work, and a group of enthusiastic people to share his aesthetic. The encounter also provided him with access to a greater range of folk crafts for which he had already acquired a taste and enthusiasm, and from which he received endless inspiration.

6-6. Munakata Shikô

Munakata Shikô was one of the most expressive printmakers in modern Japan, yet for a long time his works were ignored by other printmakers and art critics. Even when his *Ten Disciples of Buddha* (a series of twelve woodblock prints) won the Grand Prix at the Venice Biennale in 1956, the reaction of the Japanese critics was somewhat cold.[70] Munakata's association with the Mingei movement seems part of the reason for the negative reaction: Yanagi promoted Munakata's work as 'truly Japanese prints', implying that the works of the others - the mainstream printmakers of

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70. Osabe, *Oni-ga kita*, vol.2, pp.278-9.

the Creative Print Movement - were imitations of the Western prints.[71]

In the 1930s the Creative Print Movement was struggling to promote printmaking as creative art rather than simply a means of reproducing works of art, or popular (and therefore lower) art. Munakata, on the other hand, was happily supported and promoted by a group which held that individualistic expression was inferior to what comes out of obedience to the traditional skills. It is understandable that many printmakers might have felt that their efforts were being undermined by the success of Munakata. But, in reality, to what extent was Munakata associated with the Mingei movement, and how was it relevant to his work?

Munakata Shikô was born in 1903 as a poor blacksmith's son in Aomori, the northern end of Honshû Island and the poorest region in Japan.[72] The environment of his native region, together with its art, such as kite painting and *nebuta* figures, formed a strong foundation for Munakata's work. As a child, Munakata helped his father in his work, which provided him with crucial knowledge and skill with a

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71. For example, see 'Munakata Shikô-no Jushô' (1956), in *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.14, p.325.
72. Munakata's autobiography contains inaccurate information, much of which was corrected by Osabe Hideo in *Oni-ga Kita*, his two-volume biography of Munakata (Bungei Shunjû, 1979). There is an earlier biography in three volumes by Odakane Jirô, published by Shinchôsha 1973-6. Odakane concentrates on the artist and includes many anecdotes, while Osabe's main achievement is to set Munakata in the social and cultural context of his time.

knife. When he was eighteen, he was employed as an errand boy in a lawyer's office. By then, he had already developed a passion for Western-style painting. Munakata and other aspiring young artists and writers formed a group, held exhibitions and exchanged information with similar groups in other cities. Through this network, Munakata saw reproductions of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist paintings. Van Gogh's paintings became an obsession for Munakata, as they were to many other young artists-to-be at the time.

The conventional path to success as a painter was to have one's painting selected to be shown at Teiten, the government-sponsored annual exhibition in Tokyo. Aiming at this goal, Munakata left Aomori for Tokyo in 1924. It was not until 1928, however, that he finally saw his work selected for the exhibition. In the meantime, Munakata acquired friends in literary, as well as artistic, circles.

In 1928, before he successfully submitted his painting to Teiten, he visited Hiratsuka Un'ichi, one of the major printmakers, to study woodblock printmaking. Munakata's early prints show the strong influence of Kawakami Sumio in style and motifs - Western ladies, flowers and butterflies.[Fig.67] These early prints were multi-coloured and were not printed by Munakata himself. This may seem strange because at the time the Creative Print Movement was at its height, and one of its arguments for

creativity included an emphasis on 'print designed, cut and printed by the artist'.[73] The production of multi-coloured prints requires precision, and this would have been difficult for Munakata, who always had bad eyesight. In fact, it deteriorated further as he aged, until he completely lost the sight from one eye towards the end of his life.[74] This lack of normal eyesight was an important contributing factor to the style of Munakata's work. Because it made it difficult for him to work from a model, it seems he developed a method, in which he created an image in his mind and expressed it in the first instance rather than reevaluating and retouching his work. The amazing speed with which he painted, and drew and even cut blocks, has been interpreted as his urge to put down an image before it disappeared from his mind.[75]

While his painting was not as successful as he had wished

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73. See Chapter One.
74. See Ugata Tatsuo '"Kentô" to Munakata Hanga', *Nihon-no Mingei*, Nihon Mingei Kyôdan, no.234, March 1975. Ugata Tatsuo, journalist and art critic, is Munakata's son-in-law. He observed Munakata closely, and wrote valuable articles. *Kentô* is a pair of alignment marks to indicate the exact positioning of the printing paper to allow the printing of more than one block onto one sheet of paper. It was invented for *ukiyo-e* prints during the Edo period (1740s), making possible registration of blocks for polychrome prints.
75. For example, Ugata writes:

    > [Munakata's] 'painting' is a race, as it were, between the passing images and the artist himself, who chases the image and 'pins it down'... In fact, the speed of his brush is incredible. It is a common event that he finishes one painting before a photographer sets his camera in order to take a picture of the artist while painting. Even then, Munakata is vexed, as if his hands are not working fast enough to catch the image as it comes and goes (*Nihon-no Mingei*, no.234, pp.20-22.)

(his second successful submission to Teiten was not until 1931), Munakata's prints began to be recognised. His first submission of four prints to the Kokugakai exhibition was accepted in 1930. From that time until 1953, Kokugakai was his major exhibition stage. It was also at Kokugakai that Munakata was 'discovered' by the Mingei group in 1936. He had been offered a sub-membership (*kaiyû*) in the previous year because of his *Cluster of Flowery Branches* (Banda Fu), in which he established his own style of black-and-white prints. The work, a series of seven prints, was inspired by words from Fukushi Kôjirô, one of the contemporary poets with whom Munakata became associated.

His submission to Kokugakai in 1936 was *Yamato the Beautiful* (Yamato shi Uruwashi).[Fig.68] It was also inspired by a poem, by Fukushi's pupil Satô Ichiei. But this time, Munakata planned to cut the entire poem onto the block, like the old Chinese stone engravings, with nearly 2000 characters with images from the poem, making a printed scroll. The scroll, consisting of twenty printed sheets, made into four frames, told the epic of Yamato Takeru, Japan's mythological hero, interpreting the legend with modern humanistic sensitivity. Visually, the letters and pictures are mingled together, in roughly cut images with intense power which seems almost coming out of the frame. However, the exhibition officials refused to hang it in its completed form out of an understandable concern that the four frames would take up too much wall space.

It was then that Hamada Shôji, who was on the hanging committee of the craft section and had finished the craft selection, walked into the print section and saw Munakata and his work. Hamada called Yanagi, who was also extremely impressed, and the two negotiated with the officials for the work to be hung in its complete form. Yanagi was so moved by *Yamato the Beautiful* that he offered to buy it for the Folk Craft Museum.

Osabe points out that the incident of *Yamato the Beautiful* had two major consequences: firstly, it prompted the long and important association between Munakata and the Mingei group; and secondly, the overturning of the initial decision not to give Munakata the space he wanted, allowed him, with strong support from Yanagi and Hamada, to freely exhibit large sets of prints from then on.[76]

When Munakata visited Yanagi's house to deliver the set of prints, Yanagi told him how important the works of ordinary people, like those of Munakata's father, could be. Munakata was shocked to hear such words from 'a man of great social respect'.[77] Yanagi sent Munakata to Kyoto to spend some time with Kawai Kanjirô, who gave him lectures on Zen with his living-in pupils. It was Yanagi who later suggested that Munakata hand-colour his black-and-white prints from the back of the sheet, a procedure which Munakata adopted.

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76. *Oni-ga Kita* I, pp.148-9.
77. *Ban Gokudô*, p.71.

Yanagi arranged outlets for Munakata's prints, introducing his work to many of his friends and arranging an order-purchase scheme to ensure income for Munakata and his family. He also criticised and encouraged Munakata's new works. Osabe suggests that for Munakata the most significant aspect of meeting Yanagi was that it liberated him from his inferiority complex about his being the son of a poor blacksmith.[78]

Although the initial meeting with Yanagi had such a strong impact and the association was a long-lasting one, the most influential figure in Munakata's subsequent works seems to be Mizutani Ryôichi. It was Mizutani who told him the Buddhist story of Zenzai Dôji, which became the subject of *Kegon Sutra* (1936)[Fig.69] and *Kannon Sutra* (1938)[Fig.70], the latter being one of Munakata's representative works in the early period.

Another of Mizutani's important contributions was *Utô the Seabird*, made in 1939.[Fig.71] The legend of the *utô*, seabird which is enshrined in Aomori City, had been made into a *nô* story which Mizutani not only told Munakata, but danced in front of him to show the spirit of the art of *nô*, as well as the story line. Munakata made a brilliant series of thirty-one prints in which he interpreted the story. The rhythm created by the successive prints, at times fast and at times providing a repose, seems to

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78. *Oni-ga Kita* I, p.155.

recreate the impact of the *nô* play, not only visually but almost audibly. Mizutani selected eight prints to which Munakata added a small image, and submitted the nine prints in one large frame, to Teiten. The work was awarded the first prize. It was the first time that a print had won the prize.

The Mingei group wholeheartedly supported Munakata. Munakata's sensitivity to spirituality - he perceived all the religions he knew at a personal level - made him a delightful pupil for Yanagi, Mizutani and Kawai. Munakata's association with the Mingei group certainly opened up more opportunities for work and immediate economic support to him. Yanagi's praise for Munakata's work helped his reputation to a large extent. But Yanagi's praise for Munakata's work was largely limited to his prints. Yanagi admitted that some of Munakata's calligraphy and Japanese-style painting were masterpieces, but said many were 'redundant and not good'.[79] He liked Munakata's oil paintings even less, claiming that many of them were:

> large and ostentatious, the brush strokes are rough and colours deep and dark... Oil painting is not an appropriate path for Munakata... [his works are] rough and lack calmness. The nature of oil painting exposes him too much.[80]

He maintained that the indirectness of prints was the path for Munakata:

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79. 'Munakata-to watashi' (Munakata and I), 1958, *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.14, p.338.
80. 'Munakata-no koto' (On Munakata), 1936, *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.14, p.301.

> The indirect path of prints smoothes his edges and calms down his excessive energy. During the process of the three stages of printmaking - drawing the design, cutting the block and pulling the impression - he is sieved, strained and cooked to the essence. What remains is the best of Munakata... I think printmaking is salvation for Munakata .[81]

Munakata himself seemed to be unconcerned with Yanagi's opinions, and kept producing paintings. He claimed that the four means of expression - printmaking, Japanese-style painting, calligraphy and oil painting - were all important to him because together they formed his art as a whole.[82] Munakata's central concern was always his own art, and not its analysis or one aspect of it. In fact, Yanagi tended to stress qualities in Munakata that were not necessarily relevant to the characteristics of his work. For example, Yanagi was fascinated when he heard Munakata say 'I am not responsible for my work', and often quoted this to prove his point that Munakata's work was 'born', rather than 'created', because his work was so free and natural that Munakata himself did not know which parts of his work were beautiful himself.[83] While Yanagi's analysis of Munakata is fascinating as well as convincing in some ways, one cannot but feel that Yanagi is trying to see what he wants to see in Munakata's work. A good contrast to Yanagi's analysis is the famous description of Munakata by Ôhara Sôichirô, the Kurashiki industrialist and a generous patron of the artist:

> There are two personalities within Munakata - himself

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81. *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.14, p.301.
82. *Ban Gokudô*, pp.118-120.
83. 'Munakata-no Shigoto' (Munakata's Work), 1947, *Yanagi Sôetsu Zenshû*, vol.14, pp.318-322.

> and his gate-keeper. It is the latter whom we usually communicate with. He is dressed as the real Munakata, plays his role and diligently does all the miscellaneous duties...
>
> But the real Munakata continues to create passionately, oblivious to the deeds of his 'gate-keeper'. Eventually, the 'gate-keeper' Munakata attends to the quickening of the new inspiration. The quickening increases its rate till at last it absorbs the 'gate-keeper'. The two Munakatas now united, tackle the woodblock, and give birth to his new print.
>
> His primeval directness, which has been momentarily crystallised in a print, is direct yet not raw. Although it is not raw, the blood which runs through it is thicker than that which runs through a human body. In it, the uninhibited power of a primeval man exists side by side with the delicate and spiritual rhythm of Japan.[84]

Although Yanagi's analysis and that of Ôhara have some common ground in that neither sees Munakata as a person as representative of his work (or vice versa), Yanagi's writings seem to be dictated by his own notions of 'power from without' or 'beauty that is born, not created' and so on, while Ôhara looks more freely into the artist and his works themselves.

The resignation of the Mingei group from the craft section of Kokugakai in 1937, to concentrate on exhibiting at the Japan Mingeikan (Japan Folk Crafts Museum), did not affect Munakata, who continued to exhibit in the print section. The encounter with the Mingei group enriched Munakata's spiritual perception largely through individuals like Kawai Kanjirô and Mizutani Ryôichi, but did not fundamentally change his work or his way of life, which

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84. Originallly written by Ôhara in 1957, quoted in Tanikawa Tetsuzô, 'Munakata Shikô-no Hito-to Geijutsu', *Jômon-teki Genkei-to Yayoi-teki Genkei*, p.303.

Osabe describes:

> [Munakata] turned the disadvantage of his lack of academic education into the advantage of not being restricted by knowledge; he turned the disadvantage as a painter of having a poor eyesight, which prevented him from drawing precisely from objects, into an advantage by choosing printmaking and through boldly deformed images; if Kokugakai provided only a small space for prints, he created huge works overwhelming others. Although Munakata had always been like that, from this time on [the meeting with the Mingei group], to put himself on his mettle and turn his own disadvantages into advantages, would become more clearly Munakata's basic way of life.[85]

The relationship between the Mingei group and the above second-generation artists was primarily that of moral support by the former for the latter, as the talented artists received constructive criticisms of and appreciation for their work. An important factor in this context was the closeness of the members to each other, particularly among the same generation. They often travelled together, to areas like Korea and Okinawa, and the exchange of experiences among them ensured the maximum effect would be drawn from such study trips. The magazine *Kôgei* promoted and analysed their efforts.[86] The absence of Kuroda from the magazine suggests the distance that developed between him and the group after the Kamigamo Cooperative and particularly after his experience in Hokkaidô, where he was invited by the mayor to instruct in

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85. *Oni-ga Kita* I, p.166.
86. No.24 (1932) introduces Serizawa and his work; No.68 (1936) is a special issue on Kawai; No.71 (1930) and no.101 (1939) are on Munakata; No.76 (37) is on Serizawa; No.77 (1937) is on Hamada.

the industrial research centre's newly established woodcraft section. The arrangement was made through Kawai Kanjirô, but it turned out that the local officials expected to see immediate results, while woodcraft as Kuroda knew it was a long and slow process. Other subsequent attempts at instructing in various regions, presumably arranged to realise Yanagi's ideal vision of the master craftsman instructing artisans, apparently also ended in disappointment. Kuroda took it philosophically: 'I can understand it. No one wants to do such tedious work.'[87] Asked how his work was related to the Mingei, Kuroda said:

> That depends on the viewer's understanding. If one tried to solve the contradictions [of the works of craft artists in the Mingei movement], one would not have time to produce... I can't really give an answer.[88]

Similarly, on the question of beauty and utility, he said:

> That was not a question in the beginning [of the movement]. When an object exists, it should have both. I cannot consider beauty and utility separately. It is convenient when explaining things, but it can also be an obstacle when trying to make objects.[89]

Kuroda's comments here are significant. They indirectly point to the irrelevance of Yanagi's Mingei theory, from the standpoint of the modern craft artist. For Kuroda, Serizawa and Munakata, the three artist/craft artists associated with the Mingei movement, Yanagi's connoisseurship and his belief in the importance of craft

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87. Shirasu Masako, *Kuroda Tatsuaki Hito-to Sakuhin*, Shinshindô, Kyoto, 1972, pp.224-5.
88. Recorded talk, 1976.
89. Recorded talk, 1976.

was inspiring, but his Mingei theory was not significant for their work. It could not have been, as their work was modern craft art, and they were all motivated artists who followed their creative instinct.

It can be said that, as far as the craft artists were concerned, the Mingei group, with its closeness and the mutual support among its members, was a kind of cooperative in itself. But it was not the kind of society Yanagi idealised, nor was it even inspired by him. It is important to note that at this level Yanagi's charisma as leader was much less significant than in the case of the New Mingei movement. To the extent that the Mingei group was a circle of people with similar but not necessarily unified aesthetics, it was a group formed spontaneously, and promoted craft inspired by, or drawing strength from, the style of a wide range of Western and Japanese folk crafts. Yanagi's taste for simplicity and familiarity was not always realised in the works of its craft artists.

CONCLUSION

The re-interpretation of the early Mingei movement as an historical interaction of a range of people and ideas, rather than simply the development of Yanagi's ideas and practice, throws a new light on some important aspects of the history of the Mingei movement.

Firstly, as a craft movement it began as one current in the broad stream of modern Japanese craft movements. It was distinguished from other movements in that it took its inspiration from some characteristics of folk crafts - practical, durable, simple and familiar.

Secondly, as an aesthetic movement, it sprang from the modern consciousness which Takashina Shûji described as the 'discovery of beauty' in his 1972 essay:

> If 'beauty' is inherent in an object, it is possible for us to create 'beautiful' objects by examining its nature and discovering its laws. On the other hand, if 'beauty' is solely a matter of the mind which perceives it, problems concerning beauty should more deeply concern psychology. It also follows that in order to approach 'beauty' we need to further strive to sharpen our mind.[1]

Takashina argues that the transition from the former (as exemplified in Greek philosophy) to the latter marked the birth of modernity in art. The survey of the history of modern craft seems to support Takashina's claim.

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1. *Nihon Kindai-no Bi-ishiki*, p.292.

According to him, the modern mind perceives that:

> beauty is not a substance which can be measured by given standards, but rather, something which moves our mind by presenting a new world hitherto unknown to us.[2]

Kuroda Tatsuaki's comment that 'Skill can be measured but expression cannot' reflects this consciousness. The modern Japanese mind rejected assessment of craft by skill, and insisted that it should be assessed by expressiveness. In addition, the aesthetic tradition of the tea ceremony of the sixteenth century lent this view an authority and assured its continuity within Japanese culture.

Thirdly, the role of Yanagi Sôetsu within the movement now needs to be reassessed. When set in relation to other early members of the movement, the contradictory nature of Yanagi's aesthetic becomes clear: on the one hand Yanagi advocated the beauty of ordinary crafts, and on the other he set out a formula - his version of the laws of beauty and how it was brought about. Thus he had no sooner declared the freedom of the modern aesthetic than he created fetters to confine it. One suspects that he himself became trapped by the fetters.

The religious nature of Yanagi's aesthetic was the key to the extent of the impact which it had on others. The humanist overtones of Yanagi's writing strongly appealed to the intellectuals who were awakening to the idea of

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2. *Nihon Kindai-no Bi-ishiki*, p.298.

democracy, while its authoritative and decisive metaphysical argument destroyed their belief in an established hierarchy in art. The instant he had done so, however, the Mingei theory itself turned against modern aesthetics and became confined to its own concept of beauty. The stronger the initial impact on a particular person, the stronger his or her self-confinement in Yanagi's laws of beauty - 'self-confinement, because Yanagi's first publication *Kôgei-no Michi* was more a religious confession, which marked an end to his spiritual journey in search for truth, than an aesthetic manifesto.

This contradiction within Yanagi's message explains why some artists and intellectuals - such as Kusube Yaichi and Tanikawa Tetsuzô - initially opened their eyes to the new aesthetic by Yanagi yet gradually left him because of its restrictive aspect. Others, however, stayed in the movement for the group's modern sensitivity and its *Shirakaba*-style mutual support.

It is hoped that the present study has cleared up part of the mythology surrounding the Mingei theory and movement, by placing the movement in its historical context. But the full significance of the Mingei movement is yet to be established. First of all, the nature and achievements of the New Mingei movement need to be examined. Such an examination should include: the relationship between Yanagi's Mingei theory and the way it was interpreted and put to practice; the place of the movement in the context

of other similar movements - Yamamoto Kanae's Farmers' Art movement, for example; and its impact on the traditional local crafts (which Brian Moeran partly explored in his 1984 study of Onta kiln in Kyûshû). Lastly, the movement's postwar development needs to be re-interpreted. The movement rapidly expanded in a few decades after the Second World War at a time when Japan saw radical changes in the social, cultural and aesthetic fields. The expansion, however, was achieved without examining the contradictions within its theory and practice. The author believes that such re-examination is the only solution if the movement is to overcome many of its present problems.

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