Imports and Imitations: The Taste for Japanese Lacquer in Eighteenth-Century China and France

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ABSTRACT

Although Japan was an enigma to most of the eighteenth-century world, imported Japanese lacquers and imitation Japanese-style lacquered objects played significant roles at the Chinese and French courts. In France, no collection surpassed that of Marie Antoinette (r. 1774–92), who inherited dozens of Japanese lacquered caskets from her mother, the Habsburg empress Maria Theresa (r. 1740–80), and subsequently began commissioning elaborate pieces of furniture that incorporated lacquer panels. In Qing dynasty (1644–1911) China, the Yongzheng (r. 1723–35) and Qianlong (r. 1736–95) emperors also collected imported caskets and commissioned imitation Japanese-style lacquers from their palace workshops. Whether in China or France during the eighteenth century, the rulers' shared fascination with Japanese lacquer demonstrates not only the political value of possessing such rare objects, but also the different ways in which the rulers' tastes were met. Investigating the simultaneous taste for and responses to Japanese and Japanese-style lacquers in eighteenth-century China and Europe complicates the binary relationship that often dominates studies of early modern global exchange. This article analyzes the different ways that Chinese and French subjects valued Japanese lacquered objects and, in doing so, shared an interest in a place neither truly understood.

Introduction

To most of the early modern world, Japan was known only through the porcelains and lacquerwares that it distributed through intermediaries. From 1635 until 1853, the Tokugawa shogunate (1615–1868) enacted the *sakoku* ("closed country") policy, which most notably prohibited Japanese citizens from leaving the country and limited foreign trade to the Chinese and the

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Dutch. Despite these limitations, Japanese *kakiemon* and *imari* porcelain could be found throughout the great houses and royal palaces of eighteenth-century Europe for domestic use as well as decoration.[1] However, Japanese lacquer objects were even more treasured: much rarer and more expensive than porcelain, lacquerwares offered fascinatingly impervious yet reflective black surfaces decorated with gold in a stunning contrast of familiar and unfamiliar materials. With the *Rhus vernicifera* species of tree unique to Asia, and the toxic sap untransportable after tapping, European attempts to replicate it led only to imitation lacquer-like substances and exoticizing styles that, although popular, paled in comparison. The rarity and cost of true Japanese lacquerwares typically meant that only royals and aristocrats could afford collections of imports, and the greatest concentration in Europe was accumulated at the French court.

Simultaneously, on the other side of the world and much closer to Japan, the eighteenth-century emperors of China's Qing dynasty (1644–1911) also nurtured a fondness for Japanese lacquers. The effects of intra-Asian trade and contact on Japanese art and culture are well established, as is the importance of Japan to modern Chinese art.[2] But Japan's effects on Qing art and culture are less well understood despite the fact that during the eighteenth century in particular, China overwhelmingly encountered Japan through material culture and decorative objects brought by Chinese trading ships returning from the archipelago.[3] Tokugawa limits on the quantities and types of exports, the lack of a formal diplomatic relationship between China and Japan, and Qing interest in importing primarily raw materials meant that Japanese lacquers were also fairly rare luxury goods in China. When authentic imports could not be acquired, the emperors were equally satisfied with imitations of Japanese forms, styles, and patterns produced in their own domestic court workshops. Although Chinese artisans also used true lacquer sap, the unusual shapes and predominantly black-and-gold palette of these Japanese-style objects contrasted dramatically with the red or red-and-black palette, established forms, and dense patterning of traditional Chinese lacquerware.

In both China and France, the eighteenth-century rulers' collections of Japanese and Japanese-style lacquered objects were important demonstrations of political meaning and global engagement that provide new sites for interpreting the materiality of cross-cultural interactions during the period. Surprisingly, the French royal and Qing imperial collections of authentic and imitation Japanese lacquers share a number of characteristics apart from their contents: namely, their sustained completeness, a reliable provenance, and the

passing of a material legacy directly from a ruling parent to a royal child. Eighteenth-century French royal taste for Japanese lacquers culminated spectacularly in the collection of Queen Consort Marie-Antoinette (r. 1774–92), who inherited fifty authentic boxes from her mother, the Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa (r. 1745–80), and subsequently began commissioning elaborate lacquer-paneled furniture. In China, the Yongzheng emperor's (r. 1723–35) taste for Japanese lacquers resulted in an early imperial collection of imports that was significantly augmented by domestically produced imitation Japanese forms, practices continued by his son and direct successor, the Qianlong emperor (r. 1736–95). By moving beyond a binary opposition of French *chinoiserie* and Chinese "occidenterie" to include Japan in the comparison of Qing and Bourbon interests in exotic luxury goods, such a triangulation usefully complicates the East-West relationships that often dominate studies of the global eighteenth century.[4]

Japanese Lacquer in Pre-Revolutionary France

More than two centuries after Marco Polo introduced Europe to the legend of "Zipangu" and its golden palaces, the first Europeans landed in Japan in 1542–43. In 1549, Portuguese Jesuits established a mission there, and for approximately the next century, Catholic Spain and Portugal dominated religious, political, commercial, and artistic contact between the archipelago and Europe. Consequently, a few Asian lacquers began to enter European royal collections, where they were typically referred to as objects "in the Indian manner," with the nonspecific geographic catchall of "India" used to refer to objects that were actually Chinese or Japanese in origin.[5] The Iberians in Japan, known as *namban* ("southern barbarians"), also gave their name to a new but short-lived form of export lacquer that was produced in European forms such as small caskets, coffers, furniture, and religious paraphernalia, all decorated with distinctly non-Japanese patterns of dense floral and geometric shapes rendered in both gold lacquer paint and inlaid mother-of-pearl on a black background. Reflecting the desirability of such rarities, in 1608 the Jesuits presented Henry IV's (r. 1589–1610) queen consort Marie de Médicis (1575–1642) with a *namban* lacquer desk inlaid with mother-of-pearl and silver.[6] Yet, in spite of two Japanese missions to Rome, the 1582–1590 Tenshō embassy and the 1613–1620 Keichō embassy, the Tokugawa government ultimately rejected the Catholic evangelism that accompanied Iberian trade, expelling both the Portuguese

and the Spanish in 1624 and banning all trade with Portuguese Macau in 1639. Consequently, the Protestant Dutch East India Company (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*, 1602–1800, hereafter VOC) became the sole European presence permitted in the archipelago—and even then, only for carefully controlled trade. These restrictions guaranteed that most people in early modern Europe defined Japan through objects rather than people.[7]

French desire for lacquer did not diminish with the trade restrictions of *sakoku*, and for the rest of the seventeenth century, the VOC imported mostly large two-door lockable *comptoirs* (cabinets), chests, and coffers with more symmetrical decoration specifically designed to meet European needs and tastes.[8] Those that subsequently arrived in France retained their value long after changing owners: the mid-seventeenth-century Mazarin Chest (now held in the Victoria and Albert Museum), originally owned by Cardinal Mazarin (1602–61), was later treasured by both his niece Hortense Mancini (1646–99) and her great grand-nephew Charles, the duc de Bouillon (1706–71).[9] The 1686 Siamese embassy to Louis XIV (r. 1643–1715) further increased French interest in Japanese lacquer thanks to the large number of Japanese *comptoirs*, coffers, and other objects included among their gifts.[10] Soon after, Parisian *marchand-merciers*, the sellers of all manner of furniture and *objets d'art*, dramatically increased their inventories of both authentic Asian goods and Asian-style imitations in their shops to meet consumer demand.[11] However, frustrated by decreasing quality in the face of increasing prices and extreme dissatisfaction with shogunate-mandated procedures for dealing with the lacquerers, the VOC officially ceased to import large pieces of Japanese lacquer in 1693.[12] As a result, the production of imitation lacquer developed into a respected industry in France, where *vernissage* was largely the realm of trained artisans, as opposed to in England, where "japan(n)ing" (the term conflating the nation with the material, as with China and porcelain) was predominantly for amateurs and accomplished elite women.[13] In Paris, a short-lived imitation lacquer workshop at the Gobelins manufactory produced a small quantity of lacquered fabrics and coaches, and there was an imitation-lacquer workshop at Chantilly.[14] Closest in quality to East Asian lacquer was *vernis Martin*, the durable, shiny copal lacquer developed in Paris by the Martin brothers and even granted royal patents in a crucial acknowledgement of its achievements.[15]

But even the best *vernis Martin* furniture was an inferior substitute for authentic *comptoirs*, and in French eyes, the latter continued to epitomize Japanese lacquer well into the eighteenth century. To meet this demand, French

marchands-merciers typically travelled to the Netherlands for the highest-quality stock of old lacquer panels.[16] The importance of authentic Japanese lacquer furniture to Parisian *marchands-merciers* is amply summarized in the painter François Boucher's (1703–70) trade card for François Gersaint's (1694–1750) shop *À La Pagode* (1740, fig. 1). Boucher, himself an avid collector of Japanese lacquer owning more than forty pieces, presents Gersaint's diversity of Asian offerings around a large lacquer *comptoir* on a carved stand (as they were commonly displayed in Europe), which is decorated with a man and a large bird in a landscape with trees and a small building in the background.[17] The central position and size of the *comptoir* dominate the entire scene, framing the variety of figurines, porcelains, fans, and natural wonders attractively arranged below it and offering visual evidence for the text above that explicitly identifies a "*Tableaux de Cabinet, Pagodes, Vernis et Porcelaines du Japon*." The eponymous *pagod* (generic East Asian figure) of the shop name sits atop the *comptoir*, a round-bellied and wide-faced figure perhaps suggesting the Budai "Lucky Buddha" form of Maitreya Buddha—an intriguing choice considering the frequent presence of such statues in commercial settings today due to Budai's association with prosperity.

Gersaint's essay on lacquer for the 1745 catalogue accompanying the estate sale of Chevalier Antoine de Laroque (1672–1744) is considered the first French commentary on Japanese lacquer specifically written for connoisseurs and collectors. To underscore its desirability, he begins by plainly stating that lacquer was little known, rare, and shockingly expensive even in Holland because the Dutch no longer imported it due to cost, difficulty of acquisition, and decreasing quality in contrast to *ancien laque* ("old lacquer," meaning seventeenth-century pieces).[18] Two years later, Gersaint expanded upon these thoughts in the 1747 sale catalogue for the estate of Louis-Auguste Angran, the vicomte de Fonspertuis (d. 1747). In a much longer essay on Japanese lacquer, Gersaint repeatedly restated his unique position as the only author other than the Jesuit Jean-Baptiste du Halde (1674–1743) to consider it superior to Chinese lacquer, noting that, "to connoisseurs, [Chinese lacquer] holds no attraction" (*Catalogue raisonné de Fonspertuis* 119). Gersaint's opinion was corroborated in 1760 by the firsthand experience of Father Pierre d'Incarville, S.J. (1706–57), a Jesuit and amateur botanist serving at the French mission in Beijing. Posthumously published, his *Mémoire* on Chinese lacquer delivered to the Parisian Académie des Sciences opined, "however refined the gold motifs applied to lacquer in China may be, they are not comparable to the handsome pieces of Japanese

Fig. 1: François Boucher (1703–70), Trade card for François Gersaint's shop *À la pagode* (1740) Bibliothèque Nationale de France. Estampes, AA3 CAYLUS.

lacquer" (133–34). Despite the instability and frequent interchangeability of the geographic qualifiers "Chinese," "Japanese," and "Indian" in much of early modern European writing about Asia, by the second half of the eighteenth century, there was a clear qualitative distinction between Chinese and Japanese lacquer. And whether Gersaint's comments accurately reflect French taste at the time or were simply a sales tactic, his assessment was deeply influential in Paris, especially at the French court.

Marie-Antoinette's Lacquers

Although both Louis XV (r. 1715–74) and Louis XVI (r. 1774–91) bought furniture inset with lacquer panels, neither were as passionate about Japanese lac-

quer as the women in their lives.[19] Marie Leszczynska (r. 1725–68), queen consort of Louis XV, not only created a *cabinet des Chinois* (a room decorated in Chinese style) at Versailles, but also in 1737 commissioned a *commode* (a low chest of drawers) that incorporated Japanese lacquer panels—the earliest known dated piece of such furniture in the *Garde-Meuble* royal furniture repository.[20] Although the queen consort's taste for Asian style was a significant factor in court taste, Madame de Pompadour (1721–64), Louis XV's mistress from 1745 until her death, was the most famous Japanese lacquer and lacquer furniture collector of her time. Madame de Pompadour spent hundreds of thousands of *livres*, most notably owning the long-prized Maria van Diemen Box (originally produced 1636–39).[21]

Surpassing both these women in her appetite for Japanese goods, Louis XVI's queen consort Marie-Antoinette accumulated a large collection of lacquer boxes and furniture, one that is distinguished in several ways. First, whereas both Leszczynska's and Pompadour's collections were dispersed, and only rarely can extant items be conclusively correlated with the brief textual descriptions in inventories and sale catalogues, Marie-Antoinette's collection was preserved nearly intact alongside its inventories and several identifiable pieces of her furniture. Second, her collection of authentic lacquer boxes was largely inherited from her mother, the Holy Roman Empress Maria Theresa, which inflects the items with deep political meaning. Finally, her interest in acquiring furniture with authentic Japanese lacquer panels followed rather than preceded this inheritance, demonstrating an interest that only developed more than a decade after her arrival in Paris. These three factors make Marie-Antoinette's collection unique, and allow for a much fuller picture of the queen's taste as well as the political nuances inherent in royal French collections of Japanese lacquer.

Among the ruling families of Austria and the Holy Roman Empire, the women in particular had long collected Asian lacquers. The earliest mention of any inventoried in a European collection dates to 1523, when Eleanor of Austria and Castile (1498–1558), then Queen Dowager of Portugal, gifted five small lacquerwares to Archduchess Margaret of Austria (1480–1530), Governor of the Habsburg Netherlands.[22] Asian lacquers are amply represented in the 1557 inventory of Eleanor's successor as Queen of Portugal, Catherine of Austria (1507–1578), who seems to have been an avid collector.[23] A Ryukyuan lacquer bowl survives from the famous 1596 inventory of Archduke Ferdinand II's (1529–95) Schloss Ambras collection, which his nephew the Holy Roman Em-

peror Rudolf II of Prague (1552–1612) inherited and expanded to include numerous *namban* cabinets, furniture, caskets, and dishes.[24] Benefiting from the Portuguese presence in Asia and from family connections with the Portuguese court, Central European rulers were able to collect a surprisingly large number of lacquers despite their location in the midst of the Continent.

Heir to this collecting tradition, but seemingly not to the objects themselves, Empress Maria Theresa was well known as a devoted lacquer collector and connoisseur who acquired boxes through both gifts and purchases, and claimed to prize Asian lacquers above even diamonds.[25] At her Viennese palace Schloss Schönbrunn in 1770, the same year that her daughter Marie-Antoinette became the Dauphine of France, Maria Theresa created a *vieux-laques-zimmer* ("old-lacquer room"): on its walls, large Chinese lacquered panels alternated with portraits of her late husband Emperor Franz I, her sons Emperor Joseph II and future Emperor Leopold II, and Leopold's wife Maria Luisa of Spain. Known generically as *cabinets chinoises* or *cabinets de laque*, these rooms were uncommon examples of wealth and privilege, and they were paneled in what was likely to have been Chinese Coromandel lacquer screens and were found more often in Austria than France during the eighteenth century.[26] The Empress used the *vieux-laques-zimmer* as a reception room through which important guests passed before audiences with her. Michael Yonan has argued that the complex web of comparisons and contrasts created by the juxtaposed panels and portraits results in an unmistakable statement about the political and commercial strength of the Habsburgs in Vienna.[27] Although Maria Theresa was not known to have stored and displayed her Japanese lacquer boxes in the room, the clear relationship she created between lacquer and rulership nonetheless extended to her collection of smaller objects—especially when gifted to her daughter, the Queen of France.

The Holy Roman Empress's first gift of a Japanese lacquer box arrived in Paris on 15 January 1779 to honor the birth of Marie-Antoinette's first child Marie-Thérèse, named after her grandmother. Upon Maria Theresa's death on 29 November 1780, she willed fifty Japanese lacquer boxes—the majority of her collection—to her daughter. Many of the boxes are in the shapes of other things (including but not limited to books, stacks of decorated paper, fruits, vegetables, animals, musical instruments, and fans), while others are simple geometric shapes such as squares, rectangles, and hexagons. Often they contain smaller boxes and trays inside, fitted tightly together in ingenious ways and shaped to complement the outer box, such as in the case of a pair of small

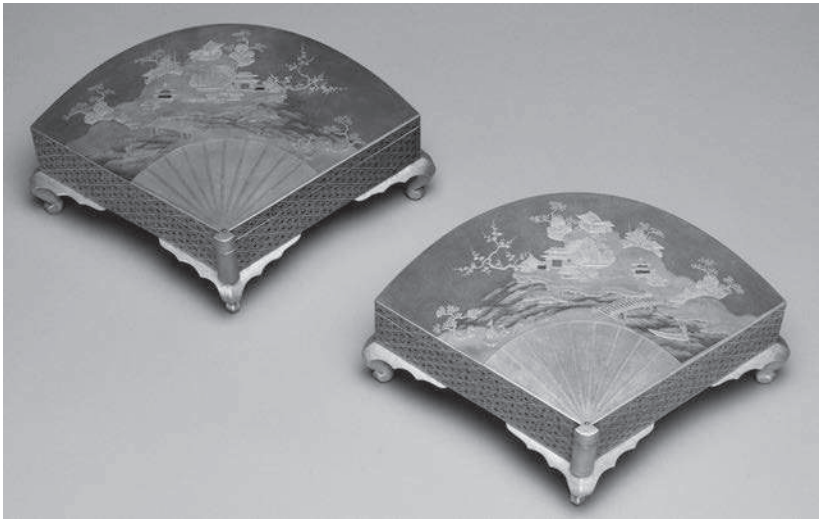

Fig. 2: Pair of Japanese fan-shaped lacquer boxes decorated with mountain and river landscapes (17th–18th centuries), formerly owned by Marie-Antoinette. Wood, black lacquer, and gold. 8.5 x 25.5 x 17.8 cm. Versailles, MR380-79, MR380-80. Photo: Thierry Ollivier. Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, France.

boxes shaped like open painted fans (fig. 2).[28] The gold and silver landscapes on each are mirror images of each other, depicting a group of buildings on a mountainous island connected to the foreground with a bridge; on one side a figure is punting on the water and on the other are a group of deer on the bank. The sides bear a repeating pattern of gold floral lozenges on a black ground, suggestive of textiles, and the boxes are supported on gold stands with "Chinese style" feet (*kara-ashi*). Inside, each box holds four additional tiny boxes also shaped like fans opened to reveal their own painted landscapes, offering variations on the theme of the outer box. Just enough space remains between the smaller boxes to reveal the glittering interior of the encasing box, decorated with a "pear-skin" technique (*nashiji*; also referred to as "aventurine lacquer") in which black lacquer is covered with densely sprinkled gold and silver flakes. The entire set totals ten boxes contained in two, a secret windfall of luxury that is only revealed upon opening.

Inheriting Maria Theresa's boxes seems to have inspired Marie-Antoinette to expand her collection. The *marchand-mercier* Dominic Daguerre (1740–

Fig. 3: Writing box with poetess Ono no Komachi (834-900), mounted by François Remond (1747–1812) in Paris ca. 1785 and owned by Marie-Antoinette. Gilt bronze, gold, silver, and black lacquer. 9.3 x 23 x 25.5 cm. Musée du Louvre, MR380-76. Photo: Martine Beck-Coppola. Musée du Louvre, Paris, France.

c. 1796) acquired choice examples for her from the estate sales of famous former collectors such as Charles, Duke of Lorraine (1712–80), who possessed a large and famous collection of objects in addition to two lacquer-paneled rooms. One box formerly in the Duke's collection, an *écritoire* (writing box or *suzuribako*, fig. 3) depicting the poetess Ono no Komachi (834–900), constitutes a rare example of a mounted lacquer owned by the queen.[29] The box cover depicts the legendary Heian period (794–1185) poetess with the long flowing hair and voluminous ceremonial robes worn by elite Heian women, along with her name and her most famous poem (although none of these details were known at the time due to the general lack of information circulating about Japan).[30] Inside, the lid interior is decorated with a lacquer *go* table surrounded by chrysanthemums and is marked in Japanese with what is likely a merchant code. The box interior has a large depression (perhaps for an ink-cake or to allow for ink preparation), a space for brushes, and two tiny gilt-copper bottles.

The entire box provides its owner with both the practical tools and an inspiring model for their own writing. But the elegant poetess on the lid contrasts sharply with the strangely mustachioed Chinese-style *pagods* incorporated into the French gilt-bronze mount. Hung with tiny bells and imitating a sort of Chinese lattice, the mount was likely made for the box at Daguerre's request around 1785 by François Rémond (1747–1812).[31] More typical for porcelain than for lacquer, such mounts, Kristel Smentek argues, should be viewed in general as a "form of cultural translation, a negotiation of difference rather than a denigration or subjugation of it" ("Global Circulations" 44). In this case, that cultural translation is a vestige of another collector's aesthetic: not only were Japanese lacquer boxes not typically mounted in France, but Marie-Antoinette only owned a few mounted porcelains, suggesting that she generally preferred her Asian decorative objects without elaborate ormolu frames.[32]

However, such frames were an important aspect of her lacquer-paneled furniture. After Maria Theresa's legacy of lacquer boxes arrived in Paris in February 1781, Marie-Antoinette prepared to store and display them in her private *cabinet intérieur* at Versailles, and she commissioned the famous *ébéniste* (cabinetmaker) Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806) to produce a *cage aux laques* to hold them, as well several other pieces of lacquer-paneled furniture for the room. The trio ordered on 15 February 1783 offers a sense of these items: a *secrétaire en armoire* (drop-front secretary) and a *commode*, each decorated with gilded embellishments and costing 1500 livres, and an *encoignure* (corner cabinet) costing 800 livres.[33] (By comparison, the combined value of all a typical Parisian wage earner's possessions at his death was 1776 livres.[34]) Delivered at Versailles in late August 1783 for 3896 livres (with delivery charge), the pieces were not installed in the *cabinet* until late the next year, when the room was redecorated in white and gold.

The marble-topped *commode* and *secrétaire* (figs. 4–5) survive to reveal the master ébéniste's skill in adapting the reality of available lacquer panels into objects that are far more elegant than their individual elements would suggest. According to Oliver Impey and Danielle Kisluck-Grösheide, the commode's center panel presents an oddly symmetrical and centered arrangement of flowers and leaves flanked by geese, while the top panel of the secrétaire presents an unusually axial floral arrangement with two small songbirds on a perch, and the bottom panel a mountainous landscape with deer and a small village.[35] Both the commode center panel and the secrétaire top center panel are overpainted to such a degree that most of the currently visible compositions—

Fig. 4: Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806), commode (*sécretaire à abattant*) for Marie-Antoinette (1783). Oak veneered with ebony and 17th-century Japanese lacquer; interiors veneered with tulipwood, amaranth, holly, and ebonized holly; gilt-bronze mounts; marble top; velvet (not original). 93.3 x 143.5 x 59.7 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art 20.155.12.

including the birds—are French additions to add interest and symmetricality, as is at least the center peak on the lower *secrétaire* panel. What Impey and Kisluck-Grösheide characterize as panels of "indifferent" quality in both pieces of furniture are thought to originate from at least three different original sources, perhaps even cannibalized from earlier French furniture (55). Faced with an ever-dwindling supply after the VOC ceased to import lacquer, the *marchands-merciers* stocked large panels taken from seventeenth-century *comptoirs* and dismantled eighteenth-century French furniture in order to reuse the old lacquer in new pieces. In short, "two of the most magnificent pieces of French royal furniture in existence [were] constructed round Japanese lacquer that is far from the best quality, only in moderately good condition when used, and . . . probably secondhand" (Impey and Kisluck-Grosheide 53). If these were the best that Riesener could procure for the queen, that availability

Fig. 5: Jean-Henri Riesener (1734–1806), drop-front secretary (*sécretaire en armoire*) for Marie-Antoinette (1783). Oak veneered with ebony and 17th-century Japanese lacquer; interiors veneered with tulipwood, amaranth, holly, and ebonized holly; gilt-bronze mounts; marble top; velvet (not original). 144.8 x 109.2 x 40.6 cm. Metropolitan Museum of Art 20.155.11.

speaks volumes about the scarcity of lacquer supply by the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

What elevates the furniture above their lacquer panels is Riesener's skill, particularly the masterful bending of the lacquer on the *commode* and the gilded embellishments on both pieces. As related by J.A. Roubo in the essential resource on the subject, *L'art du menuisier ébéniste* (1774), removing, bending, and veneering old lacquer was a difficult process fraught with pitfalls.[36] However, Riesener still chose to curve the *commode*'s four narrower lacquer panels, the two on each side and the two framing the largest center panel in the front. This sole flat panel thus projects out from the *commode*, drawing the viewer's eyes and further emphasizing its elaborate scene in contrast to the

simpler, asymmetrical flowering plants of the curved and mostly black side panels. Beaded and scrolled gilt-bronze frames surround each of the front three panels, with the two on either side of the center further enhanced by the abundant swags of roses, morning glories, and other flowers that drape heavily across them and down the interior curve. At the bottom center of both the *commode* and the *sécretaire*, a wreath of the same flowers is flanked by overflowing cornucopia that bear crowns among their abundant agricultural contents. At the top centers, above a fluted bar wrapped in ribbons, similar swags are entwined with additional ribbons around the queen's initials "MA" overlapped in elegant arcs. Against the brilliant high relief of the gilt-bronze embellishments that make these pieces glitter even in low light, the lustrous sheen of the lacquer is subdued and shadowed in contrast. The embellishments are so complex, clever, and compelling that they easily encourage the eye to linger on them rather on the lacquer, perhaps precisely to distract from its lower quality.

The Riesener *encoignure* remained in Paris and has since been lost, but both the *sécretaire* and the *commode* were sent from Versailles to the Grand Trianon, and then in April 1788 to the Château de Saint-Cloud, both royal residences outside Paris, and today they survive in the Metropolitan Museum of Art as bequests of William K. Vanderbilt (1849–1920). The lacquer boxes remained in Paris, even after the Revolution: one day after the queen was placed under house arrest at the Tuilieries on 5 October 1789, she charged Madame Campan (1752–1822), First Lady of the Bedchamber, with the care of her "most precious things" in a decision that preserved the collection of 68 lacquer boxes practically intact (Kopplin *Les laques* 43). Five days later, on 10 October, Marie-Antoinette's favored *marchand-mercier* Dominic Daguerre and his partner Martin-Eloi Lignereux (1751–1809) inventoried the boxes down to their precise locations in the *cage aux laques*, a vitrine.[37] Lignereux stored the box collection until late November 1793, when it became too much of a liability given the recent royal executions. He then presented it to the Commission des Arts, who accepted it for the newly opened and public Musée du Louvre, and Marie-Antoinette's lacquers were officially transferred into the national collection.[38] The Queen's taste and collection were thus preserved for posterity, but the French taste for Japan remained deeply embedded among subsequent rulers, easily surviving the fraught fluctuations between monarchy and republic, and setting the stage for the profoundly influential *japonisme* of the late nineteenth century.

Japanese Lacquers in Late Imperial China

Beginning in the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) and continuing in subsequent centuries, pre-modern Sino-Japanese relations ebbed and flowed depending on the state of politics, religion, culture, and commerce in each place.[39] The Chinese taste for lacquers and other Japanese imports is recorded from at least the tenth century, but that interest increased dramatically during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) thanks to the diplomatic and trade relationship established with the Ashikaga shogunate (1392–1573), which resulted in perhaps as many as twenty trade missions sent from the archipelago to the mainland between 1401 and 1547.[40] Although this period partially overlapped with the Ming maritime ban that (among other restrictions) limited accepted trade with Japan to departures from the port of Ningbo until 1567, both smuggling and a robust private trade continued, demonstrating a significant material discrepancy between policy and reality in how China and Japan encountered each other.

By the late sixteenth century, Chinese literati elite, particularly in the Jiangnan region of the southeastern coast, considered Japanese lacquers fashionable collectibles to be curated and appreciated within established connoisseurial categories.[41] A variety of texts demonstrate ample appreciation for all things Japanese, but lacquers are often singled out for particular praise during the Wanli reign (1572–1620). Written during this period, *A Study of Japan* (*Riben kao*) by Li Yangong 李言恭 (*jinshi* 1556) and Hao Jie 郝杰 (1530–1600) records that Japanese tribute goods (*gongwu* 貢物) arriving at the Wanli court included "sprinkled-gold cupboards, sprinkled-gold writing tables, gold-traced cosmetic boxes, sprinkled-gold portable boxes, [and] gold-leaf painted screens" (Li and Hao 67; translated slightly differently in Clunas 58). But most information about these objects comes from connoisseurial texts, such as Gao Lian's 高濂 (1573–1620) *Eight Discourses on the Art of Living* (*Zun sheng ba jian* 遵生八牋, 1591), Zhang Yingwen's 張應文 (act. late sixteenth century) *Pure and Arcane Collecting* 清閟藏 (1595), and most notably, Wen Zhenheng's 文震亨 (1585–1645) *Treatise on Superfluous Things* 長物志 (c. 1620) (Clunas 59, 187n42). Wen waxed poetic about a variety of Japanese things, but praised lacquered chests in particular:

> Japanese chests (*woxiang* 倭箱) are of black lacquer with inlaid gold and silver sheet. The large ones measure over a foot. Their hinges, pins, and

> locks are all marvelously curious and ingenious. They are highly suitable for storing antique jades, precious objects, and small scrolls of the Jin and Tang dynasties. There is another sort [that] is rather larger, of an antique and elegant pattern, with designs such as diamond diapers and 'strings of beads.' They are as light as paper and can also hold scrolls, aromatics, medicines and bibelots. It is advisable to have several ready for use in one's study. (Wen 242–43; trans. Clunas 59)

Wen's comments integrate the appearance and function of the lacquer objects, thereby emphasizing their suitability for an elegant gentleman's study, especially as protective storage for the medieval paintings and ancient jades that only the highest-ranking collectors could possess. Recent scholarship and exhibitions increasingly confirm the materiality of Ming interest in the wider world throughout the entire length of the dynasty despite the maritime ban and other strictures, and so it is clear that elite Chinese taste for Japan was established well before the Qing dynasty.[42]

Apart from sanctioned trade with the continent, Japan's experiences with foreign contact during the late Ashikaga period and throughout the Momoyama period (1573–1615) were tumultuous, including trouble with the multiethnic *wokou* 倭寇 pirates, extreme responses to European missionaries and traders, and Toyotomi Hideyoshi's (1536–98) ill-fated attempts to conquer China. The ensuing Edo-period *sakoku* policy that permitted Chinese and Dutch trade coincided with the traumatic transition from Ming to Qing dynasties on the continent and efforts to defeat the *wokou* pirates, which included the Kangxi emperor's (r. 1661–1722) coastal evacuation policy (*qianjieling* 遷界令) of 1661–84 that formally banned maritime trade but did not end it completely.[43] Although the long-established tribute system in East Asia meant that China and Japan could not acknowledge each other as equals, and therefore they did not have formal diplomatic relations, after Kangxi reestablished maritime trade, Sino-Japanese trade increased significantly. Raw materials, especially copper (*yangtong* 洋銅), became the primary Japanese exports to China throughout the eighteenth century, but the many Chinese merchants, crewmen, painters, doctors, teachers, and Chan Buddhist monks who interacted with the Japanese in Nagasaki ensured that a steady stream of other objects from and information about the archipelago returned to the mainland through unofficial channels and private trade.[44] Revived trade and the relative geographic proximity of the Jiangnan region to Japan also allowed the interest in

Japanese objects to continue there under the Qing. This was particularly true in the city of Suzhou: thanks to trade through the nearby ports of Shanghai and Ningbo, Suzhou citizens incorporated a wide variety of Japanese foods, copper objects, lacquers, fabric, paper, fans, and other objects into their daily lives.[45] The tradition of Jiangnan taste for Japan and the famous elegance of Suzhou life may well have contributed to imperial interest in Japanese lacquers, particularly small boxes, even though these remained rare across the empire. But the resources of the court during the High Qing period (1661–1795) allowed its three emperors—Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong—to satisfy their personal taste for these luxury goods without restricting their collections to the limited supply of available imports.

Japanese Lacquer at the High Qing Court

Although Qing China did not have diplomatic relations with Tokugawa Japan, both received tributary embassies from the Ryūkyū islands, which on several occasions presented Kangxi tribute gifts that included black lacquered plates and teacups from Japan.[46] There are also tantalizing indications that a few of Marie-Antoinette's Japanese boxes may have passed through Kangxi's own collections before arriving in Europe. Two boxes, including one of the fan-shaped boxes in Figure 2, include a small slip of paper pasted underneath bearing the Chinese characters *li xu* 李煦.[47] Several scholars argue that these refer to Li Xu (1655–1729), a high-ranking official in charge of the Suzhou silk manufacturies during the Kangxi reign, and who in October and November of 1693 presented the emperor with gifts including about a dozen pieces of Japanese lacquer.[48] Two other boxes in the queen's former collection also bear small paper labels with the Chinese characters *yawanzhai* 雅玩齋, literally, "Elegant Toys Studio."[49] These characters have been repeatedly misidentified as Japanese *kanji* reading *gagansai*, and misinterpreted as a maker's name, although the English translation remains the same whether from Chinese or Japanese.[50] Far more likely, especially given the connection to the Kangxi emperor through the "Li Xu" tag, is that the characters *yawanzhai* refer to Kangxi's Elegant Toys Studio, a site within his Joyful Spring Garden (*Changchunyuan* 暢春園). Gao Shiqi 高士奇 (1645–1704), one of Kangxi's favorite courtiers, visited the Studio in the 1690s and noted that it held a variety of antique Chinese bronzes, ceramics, jades, paintings, calligraphy, and "foreign treasures" (*yi zhen* 異珍) (Gao 31). Further linking these four boxes is the intriguing fact that they all share nu-

merous Chinese-inspired decorative elements, including the same short, curved legs as on Marie-Antoinette's fan-shaped boxes (fig. 2) that the Japanese called "Chinese feet" (*kara-ashi*) for the way they imitated the carved wooden stands on which prized objects were displayed on the continent. These are not the only boxes distinguished by such features in Marie-Antoinette's collection, and Japan's long interest in Chinese culture means that Chinese images and forms are common in Japanese art. Yet given the shared Kangxi-era connections of all four of Marie-Antoinette's boxes labeled in Chinese, Li Xu's work in Suzhou, and Suzhou's connections with Japan, understanding the role that China generally played in supplying European demand for Japanese things requires far more investigation.

Kangxi's son and successor, the Yongzheng emperor, not only firmly established the High Qing court taste for Japanese objects, but also seems to have been the first Qing emperor to commission imitations of them from the imperial workshops. One of the most compelling examples is a lidded lacquered box that appears to be a Japanese black-and-gold lacquered casket knotted in a patterned *furoshiki* wrapping cloth (fig. 6). The black "box" has a restrained pattern of gold leaves and pomegranates, which is mostly concealed within a *kikkō*-patterned green "cloth," carved and lacquered to imitate the knot and draping of soft fabric. This faux textile is patterned with stylized *shou* 壽 longevity characters inside hexagons interspersed with eight-petalled gold flowers in foliate medallions, combined with hexagonal *bishamon kikkō* and *hanairi kikkō* textile patterns. The illusionistic *furoshiki* treatment replicates even the folds that appear where the "cloth" is drawn tightly into its knot, and hints of bright red suggest both the material thickness of the fabric and its reversibility, the solid red side offering a calculated contrast to both the green-patterned side and the box it purports to surround. The bare corners of the black-and-gold box visible through the wrapping are a calculated departure from reality, as *furoshiki* wrappings typically conceal all but an object's silhouette when knotted closed for protection and transport. But if the lacquered "cloth" were fully square in reality, as is typical for *furoshiki* textiles, then the corners of the box underneath would not be visible. If completely concealed, however, the distinctive design and mirror-smooth surface of the identifiably Japanese black-and-gold lacquer underneath would not have been visible to signify its additional foreignness. The imperial workshop artisan who made this box therefore chose to defy the reality of an actual Japanese *furoshiki*-wrapped lacquer box in order to maximize the visual "Japaneseness" of this piece.

Fig. 6: Qing court workshops (Beijing), rectangular lidded box imitating a Japanese lacquer box wrapped *furoshiki* style (Yongzheng reign, 1722–1735). Lacquered wood, colored and gilded. 12.4 x 11 x 21.8cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, Gu108743. After *Harmony and Integrity: The Yongzheng Emperor and His Times*, 275.

Items like these are sometimes termed "imitation foreign lacquer" (*fang yangqi* 仿洋漆) in the imperial workshop archives. But more often, these archives refer to both true Japanese lacquers and Chinese-made lacquers in Japanese style as just "Japanese lacquer" (*yangqi* 洋漆).[51] Both terms utilize the same generic character for "foreign" (*yang* 洋, literally "overseas") used generically to refer to foreign imported goods (*yanghuo* 洋貨), but in the cases of the words for foreign (or foreign-style) lacquer and foreign copper, refer specifically to Japan. Palace workshop records from the Yongzheng reign include imperial commissions for both "imitation Japanese lacquer" and "Japanese lacquer," despite the impossibility of producing an actual Japanese object in China. The interchangeability of terms makes it impossible to determine from the archival record alone whether the "Japanese lacquer" items displayed in the various High Qing palaces and imperial gardens were imports or imitations.[52] Nevertheless, some paintings of Yongzheng do include identifiably Japanese objects, such as the leaf "Reading by a Brazier" within the album *Yongzheng's Amusements* (fig. 7). Directly below the hindmost leg of the emperor's chair, as if being

Fig. 7: Anonymous Qing court painter, "Reading by a Brazier," from *Yongzheng's Amusements* (Yongzheng reign, 1723–1735). Ink and colors on silk. 37.5 x 30.5 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, Gu6636-15/16. After *Harmony and Integrity: The Yongzheng Emperor and His Times*, 119.

pointed to, a small fan-shaped gold Japanese *maki-e* lacquer dish with a pattern of plum blossoms holds two small red-glazed cups, all set on a low rootwood table. Included among the decorative arts on the *duobaoge* 多寶閣 shelves at the top left is also a bundle of scrolls knotted within another hexagonal *kikkō*-patterned textile similar to that on the *furoshiki*-style "wrapped" lacquer box. Surrounded by books, works of art, and foreign treasures, Yongzheng is depicted as a scholar and connoisseur, and Gao Shiqi's description of Kangxi's Elegant Toys Studio could equally apply to this setting. Naturally, court paintings are not irrefutable documentary evidence for the presence of Japanese items in the Qing palaces. But the interiors shown in works such as "Reading by a Brazier" have been proven to include images of identifiable objects that still survive today, and at the very least the paintings are reliable demonstrations of the types of decorative objects found in the Qing palaces.

The High Qing imperial taste for Japanese lacquer was not unknown in eighteenth-century France. D'Incarville noted as much in 1760, and, through

an informant from the imperial lacquer workshops, provided many details about the imperial interest that are corroborated by the imperial archives and extant objects. He identifies it by its correct period term *yangqi*, differentiates it from Chinese lacquer, and mentions its particular connections to Suzhou, as well as that city's trade with Japan.[53] He also confirms the long-deceased Yongzheng's interest in faux Japanese lacquer, as well as that emperor's concern that the secret of its creation not extend outside the court, although d'Incarville also noted that Qianlong was not similarly concerned about protecting that knowledge. The reason for this lack of concern may have been that Qianlong preferred to collect imported lacquer boxes: both the Palace Museum in Beijing and the National Palace Museum in Taipei hold a vast assortment of eighteenth-century *maki-e* boxes collected during the Qianlong reign.[54] Their overall variety is similar to that of Marie-Antoinette's collection, but Qianlong's were likely acquired in several different ways: Jiangnan officials gifted examples as tribute during the imperial Southern Tours; hundreds of examples are recorded in the inventories of goods confiscated from the homes of corrupt officials; and some were collected specifically as models for the imperial workshops.[55]

These imports were often treated as treasures, and none more clearly than the gold-sprinkled *maki-e* box used to hold a small flint pouch that Qianlong's beloved first wife, the Xiaoxian empress (1712–48), hand-embroidered for him (fig. 8). The pouch is stored inside a Japanese box decorated with a pattern of chrysanthemums and autumn grasses in gold and silver. A brocade wrapper protected that box, and the entire array was stored within a fragrant sandalwood box inscribed with a short prose text. Written by Qianlong in Chinese and Manchu in the middle of the fourth lunar month of 1748, the text describes his empress's deeply Manchu frugality (*jianpu* 儉樸) in crafting such an ordinary thing for her husband to use during the autumn hunts in Mulan, far north of the capital, and the profound sorrow this pouch evoked for him after her unexpected death the month before. Her frugality, as symbolized by the flint pouch, was an essential Manchu cultural virtue, and therefore contrasts sharply with the decided luxury of the imported gold-and-silver lacquer box in which Qianlong preserved it. But this contrast nevertheless emphasizes the preciousness and personal significance of Xiaoxian's gift to her husband, and the autumnal pattern of chrysanthemums and grasses on the box evokes not only the autumn hunts that inspired the object, but also offers a seasonal metaphor for melancholy and even immortality. The combination of the imported

Fig. 8: Embroidered floral flint bag with flint and striker, gold-sprinkled Japanese lacquer box, brocade wrapper, note by Qianlong in Manchu and Chinese, and sandalwood box (Qianlong reign, 1736–1795); pouch embroidered 1747–48. National Palace Museum, Taipei. After *The All-Complete Qianlong*, 52.

lacquer box and imperial inscription ensured that Xiaoxian's gift to her husband would endure as a treasure long after both of their deaths.

When making imitation Japanese lacquers, the palace workshop archives record various decoration schemes, including gold designs on a black background (*heiqi yangjin* 黑漆洋金), gold-traced designs (*miaojin* 描金), attempts at sprinkled gold (*sajin* 灑金), and all-over gold (*hunjin* 渾金). The Japanese emphasis on gold in their lacquerware decoration was a key signifier of Japaneseness to the Qing, and when that material was combined with Japanese forms, the combination created works that were distinctly different from Chinese-style lacquers.[56] Although black-and-gold imitation Japanese lacquers are the most common among the Qing examples, there are also examples of all-over gold such as on the gold-covered carrier surrounding a tiered red box containing smaller boxes and trays (fig. 9). Decorated with grapes, lotuses, and auspicious double gourds on red lacquer, both the exterior carrier and interior box are patterned with symmetrical flowers similar to those on High Qing porcelain, and are displayed on another Chinese-style footed stand—here a Chinese object imitating Japanese impressions of a Chinese original. This gaudy, multicolored piece departs dramatically from Japanese lacquer aesthetics, and could hardly have deceived a collector used to the more delicate sprinkled gold on black ground of an authentic piece, but clearly satisfied the imperial Chinese taste. Variations on the black-and-gold theme need not even be produced in

Fig. 9: Qing court workshops (Beijing), imitation Japanese four-tiered box holding smaller boxes, contained within a framework with circular openings and supported on a stand (Yongzheng reign, 1722–1735). Lacquered wood, colored and gilded. 26 x 19.2 x 19.2 cm. Palace Museum, Beijing, Gu114023. After *China: The Three Emperors, 1662–1795* (263).

lacquer, as is the case with a three-tiered *inrō*-form case (fig. 10) in enamels painted on gilt copper. The multicolored auspicious-cloud pattern is immediately identifiable as a Chinese subject and treatment, its bright colors contrasting too sharply with the smoothly enameled black background that imitates Japanese lacquer on top of what may well have been imported copper. The uniquely Japanese form of this small tiered box, intended to hang from a Japanese *obi* (sash) like an external pocket, was not part of Qing dress. Just as with the "wrapped" box and the tiered set, both the appearance of the materials and their form contributed to the overall sense of "Japaneseness" of a given piece, even if it could never truly be mistaken for an imported item.

Although Qianlong was the last major Qing imperial collector of Japanese and Japanese-style lacquers, the Palace Museum in Beijing alone now holds more than one thousand pieces of Japanese lacquer that originated from the

Fig. 10: Qing court workshops, enameled gilt-copper imitation Japanese lacquer *inrō*-style case (Yongzheng reign, 1723–1735). Gilt copper, enamels, cord. 13.3 x 8.3 x 3.8 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei, *gufa* 510. After *Harmony and Integrity: The Yongzheng Emperor and His Times*, 269.

former imperial collections.[57] Whether it is as complete as Marie-Antoinette's collection is unknowable, but its division between the Palace Museum in Beijing and the National Palace Museum in Taipei also ensures unbroken provenance. All of these objects unquestionably reflect a certain Qing appreciation of Japanese styles that has been all but ignored in the East-West pairing so often applied to Qing court arts from the eighteenth century. The imitation Japanese-style objects also reflect the important role that Qing court artisans played in crafting objects to satisfy the emperors' demands for the exotic. All the Chinese-made examples discussed here carry the characteristic imprimatur of the imperial workshops, either in the distinctly continental adaptations made to accommodate a lack of materials or techniques, or the aesthetic interventions staged to accommodate the particularities of imperial taste. The prestige of the palace workshops adds a distinctly local component to these objects that make a visual claim to far more foreignness than their origins would support.

Finding Meaning in the Taste for Japan

Comparing the eighteenth-century taste for Japanese style shared by China and France offers an opportunity to consider this interest on a relatively equal footing. Not only did these two powers not have colonial designs either on each other or on Japan, but at the time there was also a mutual "recognition of compatibility and equivalence, a sense of the two cultures as civilizational equals" (Smentek, "Chinoiseries," 93). At the end of the eighteenth century, the lacquer objects assembled by Marie-Antoinette and the Qianlong emperor stood as direct expansions of the collections established by a parent who was also a ruler. The resources of all four of these rulers—Maria Theresa, Marie-Antoinette, Yongzheng, and Qianlong—may have allowed them greater access to rare luxury imports, but also enabled them to patronize the best local artisans working with lacquer at the time, whether as *ébénistes* in Paris or workshop artisans in Beijing. The uses of these luxury items in their disparate European or Chinese contexts varied significantly, but in all cases, the mere existence of such large collections demonstrated ruling power.

The fact that the High Qing imitation Japanese lacquers produced in the imperial workshops were not considered inferior to authentic objects suggests that typically there was no clear distinction between import and imitation even at the highest levels of Chinese society. One wonders what a French royal or aristocratic consumer would have thought of these imitations, but it is important to note that there is no indication of symbolic qualities for lacquer in China. In contrast, even faux-Japanese lacquers made in Europe acquired metaphorical overtones of physical preservation and immortality that challenged their commercial origins. Jean-Félix Watin (b. 1728), author of the famous and repeatedly republished treatise *L'art de faire et d'employer le vernis, ou L'art du vernisseur* (*The Art of Making and Employing Lacquer, or The Art of the Lacquerer*; hereafter, *L'art du vernisseur*), wrote that the word "lacquer" (*vernis*) connoted radiance, luster, and longevity (*éclat*, *lustre*, *durée*) and therefore unified reflective brilliance and solidity, precisely "the two basic qualities that lacquer understood as art must demonstrate in order to be perfect" (5–6). Watin goes on to praise the additional qualities that proceed from these two, such as lacquer's ability to reflect and refract light as well as its imperviousness to meteorological changes, and in these, lacquer "unites the ductility of metal, the transparency of crystal, and the solidity of fossils" (7–9). Applying these characteristics to Empress Maria Theresa's use of lacquers, Michael Yonan has ar-

gued that "luminosity and permanence served as monarchical qualities" and consequently allowed "strength to be conveyed in miniature, as exemplified by Maria Theresa's easily portable lacquered gift boxes" (663–64). The Qing emperors, building on a history of lacquerwares that was already thousands of years old, and therefore a deeply familiar tradition, were far more interested in the innovations to form and decoration that accompanied the foreign styles.

Beyond the European objects and occidentalizing styles that still dominate scholarship of the foreign in Qing court arts, both imported Japanese objects and Japanizing styles enjoyed a significant presence in the High Qing imperial collection. The various strategies employed to sinicize these objects through stylistic, formal, and functional means begin to reveal not only a more diverse taste for the exotic at the High Qing court than previously emphasized, but also suggest new methods for interpreting Chinese perceptions of Japan and for approaching the materiality of eighteenth-century intra-Asian contact. Moving beyond the identification of Japanese lacquers as luxury goods in Europe has the potential to expand the eighteenth-century luxury debates to East Asia as well.[58] But in France the role of the *marchand-mercier* in shaping both the supply of and demand for Japanese lacquer for the Parisian market cannot be understated. Given the ways that they facilitated the recycling of older Japanese lacquer panels into new French pieces, these men dramatically increased the survival rates for Japanese lacquers imported into Europe by reusing them multiple times. But if owned by royals or nobility, that provenance added value after the fall of the *ancien régime*. Pompadour's Van Diemen Box, the Mazarin Chest, and Marie-Antoinette's *commode* and *secrétaire* all later belonged to the famous English collector William Beckford (1760–1844), whose taste in Japanese lacquer was driven as much by the quality and rarity of such items as by their illustrious French provenances.[59] Beckford, who described himself as "affected with Japan-mania in a violent, incurable degree" (Watson 107), was specifically interested in obtaining Japanese lacquers owned by French royalty and the elite, which would unquestionably have included Marie-Antoinette's collection of lacquer boxes had it been sold rather than acquired by the Louvre. The interest in Japanese lacquer rather than imitation "japan" was rather unusual for England, but Beckford self-consciously perpetuated the elite French practice and carried it in new directions.

Eighteenth-century Europe's taste for Japan has often been subsumed into its taste for China as yet another manifestation of chinoiserie. However, the interest in Japanese lacquers is only one manifestation of European taste for

East Asia that extends across the arts, literature, commerce, politics, visual and material culture, and more. Given the fairly recent serious scholarly recovery of chinoiserie across multiple scholarly disciplines, it is essential to begin to separate European taste for China from its taste for Japan in all areas.[60] Eighteenth-century China and its own interest in Europe—particularly in the realm of art—has also only recently become a major topic of study. But the East-West binary that dominates comparative studies also dominates studies of High Qing China itself, to the exclusion of its fruitful longstanding trade and diplomatic relationships with the other nations and kingdoms of Central, East, South, and Southeast Asia. Turning to Japan to triangulate eighteenth-century Chinese and French interest in foreign goods disrupts that binary, revealing the similarities and differences of their attempts to collect the material manifestations of a place that neither truly understood.

NOTES

1. On the taste for specifically Japanese porcelain, see Ayers; Impey; and Mallet.

2. On these issues, see Fogel *Role of Japan* and Fogel *Crossing*.

3. For Chinese views of Japan during the Ming and Qing, see Fogel *Crossing*; on the trade itself, see Nagazumi.

4. For examples of Chinese decorative arts in occidentalizing styles, see Kleutghen.

5. See Belevitch-Stankevitch xxxiiin2.

6. Bapst discovered this detail in the dispatches of the Venetian ambassador Piero Priuli.

7. Nevertheless, Rotem Kowner has argued that contact with the Japanese was essential to developing the modern European concept of "race."

8. On cabinets in particular, see Viallé, "Japanese Lacquer."

9. On the provenance for this item, see Watson.

10. See Impey and Jörg 351–54; Belevitch-Stankevitch 256–64.

11. Sargentson discusses this at length in chapter four.

12. The Dutch were quite candid about their frustration: see Viallé, "Those Headstrong People!"

13. The two most famous japanning treatises in English providing instruction in the production of imitation lacquerware are Stalker and Parker, and Sayer and Pillement.

14. On Gobelins, see Wolvesperges, "Royal," and on Chantilly, see Miller.

15. Czarnocka has demonstrated that the Martin *vernisseurs* gradually transitioned from imitating East Asian lacquers to creating objects in Rococo styles.

16. Castelluccio argues that the French East India Company (1664–1769) was not a reliable source of lacquer panels, and contributed mostly to *chinoiserie*.

17. See Kopplin, "Le beau ton" 25.

18. See Gersaint *Catalogue raisonné de Laroque* 95–97.

19. On the kings' purchases, see Castelluccio, "Le goût personelle" 61–62, 66.

20. See Rondot 125. This *commode* is now in the Musée du Louvre, inv. OA 11913.

21. See Wolvesperges *Le meuble français* 183–86, 339–43, 365–66. The Van Diemen box is now held in the Victoria and Albert Museum (W.49–1916).

22. See Impey and Jörg 284.

23. See Jordan 194–97.

24. Trnek 49–52, 227. The late sixteenth-century *namban* "Ambras cabinet" is now thought to have been inventoried in either 1607 or 1611 in Rudolph II's collection, not Ferdinand's collection. See Impey and Jörg 287, 344n25.

25. See Yonan 653, 668 n.2.

26. See Duquenne 209.

27. See Yonan 665–68.

28. See Kopplin *Les laques* 134–37, cat. 32.

29. See Kopplin *Les laques* 68–71.

30. The text on the box reads "The flowers withered/their color faded away, / while meaninglessly / I spent my days in brooding / and the long rains were falling" (trans. Keene 234).

31. See Kopplin *Les laques* 46.

32. On Marie-Antoinette's mounted porcelains, see Kopplin, "Le beau ton" 18–20.

33. See Baulez 32.

34. See Roche 75, 81.

35. See 53–54.

36. See Roubo 1020–21.

37. Lignereux's inventory was not published until 1864; Tuetey published a more complete version in 1916.

38. Three lacquers from Marie-Antoinette's bathroom, as well as three boxes, had been listed in the 1789 inventory but apparently went missing some time between 1793 and 1832. For a more comprehensive list of Japanese lacquers in French public collections, see Lacambre.

39. On early relations through the Tang dynasty (618–906), see Wang Zhenping.

40. See Fogel *Articulating* 110–13.

41. See Clunas 58–60.

42. Foreign engagement was a key component of the 2015 British Museum exhibition *Ming: 50 Years that Changed China*, and Timothy Brook's essay in the accompanying catalogue.

43. This period is treated in detail in Ho.

44. For Chinese experiences of Japan during the Ming and Qing, see Fogel *Sagacious Monks* and Oba.

45. See Lai.

46. See Wang 219–23.

47. Both boxes are illustrated and discussed in Kopplin, *Les laques* 124–25 (cat. 27) and 134–7 (cat. 32).

48. Chen *Qing gong shihui* 9, 12n15. The argument about Li Xu was earlier found in Hsieh and Nagashima.

49. For illustrations, see Kopplin *Les laques* 116–17 (cat. 25) and 202–05 (cat. 64).

50. See Kopplin *Les laques* 50, 116, 204.

51. See Chen, "Yongzheng chao" 147–8.

52. See *First Historical Archives* 1203–04, 1221–22.

53. See d'Incarville 122, 129–130.

54. In 2002, both the National Palace Museum in Taipei and the Palace Museum in Beijing held exhibitions of Japanese lacquers and other Japanese items from the former imperial collections. See Chen "Qing gong jiu cang" and *Qing gong shihui*, and Palace Museum.

55. See Lai 8–9; Chen, "Qing gong jiucang Riben shihui" 193–96.

56. See Rawski and Rawson 433.

57. See Chen, "Yongzheng chao" 145n16.

58. On the European luxury debates, see Berg; and Berg and Eger.

59. On Beckford's taste for Japanese lacquer, see Watson; Roberts; Châtel; Earle; and Impey and Whitehead.

60. For example, see Sloboda; Yang; and Porter.

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