Charles Lang Freer and the "Discovery" of Sōtatsu | James T. Ulak

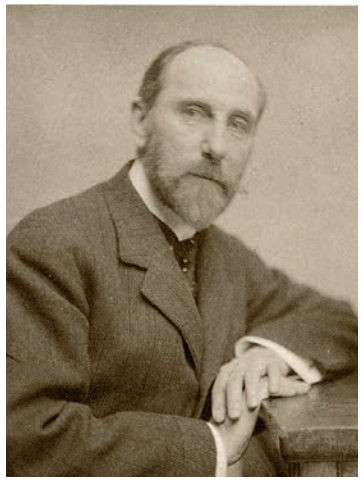
October 1906: "... waves, rocks and trees by Sōtatsu"

> After much dickering of a most exasperating nature, I bought a pair of six-fold screens by Sōtatsu.... [Kobayashi's] original price was ten thousand dollars but I cut his prices exactly in half.
> —Charles Lang Freer to Ernest Fenollosa, October 18, 1906.[1]

Kobayashi Bunshichi (1861–1923)[2] was art collector Charles Lang Freer's (fig. 7.2) very dependable dealer. Freer's famously brief notations in his daily diary of that week mention the arrival of Kobayashi and a Mr. Togawa on October 15 and a "dinner at the Detroit Club." On October 16, it was "Kobayashi and Togawa all day and evening." The two guests departed early on the morning of the seventeenth, the same day Freer wrote to his friend, Louvre curator Gaston Migeon (1861–1930), who was visiting Japan:

> Kobayashi, a dealer from Tokio, has just finished a visit to my home. I bought from him two very important pairs of screens, one with waves, rocks and trees by Sotatsu, and another of landscapes by Hokusai, done early in his career when his pen name was "Sori." They are both very fine specimens, and when you are next in America I shall take pleasure in showing them to you.[3]

There could not have been more difference between the two pairs of screens Freer was so eager to announce to Migeon and Fenollosa (1853–1908) (fig. 7.3), former curator at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, scholar, collector, dealer, and impassioned advocate for the arts of Japan. They reflected what some Japanese collectors considered an extreme range of taste, perhaps because neither artist had attained a firm footing in the then-evolving canon of Japanese taste. An incurious observer might have described Freer's choices as a ride on the tailwind of the late nineteenth-century American appreciation for Japanese art, which attempted to extract an "essence of Japan" from the visual miscellany that arrived in Western markets, unordered by chronology, lineage, or any other tools that could facilitate systematic understanding. (Overviews and histories would come after the deluge of imports, influence, and absorption.) Astute Western artistic eyes culled the disordered grab bag of Japanese prints, illustrated books, *objets*, and, occasionally, paintings and perceived a wholly new way of depicting reality. Organic, metamorphic design patterns, flat color fields, asymmetric composition, and oddly angled perspectives refreshed stale European



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academic modes and dramatically informed the movements of Art Nouveau and impressionism. The names Ogata Kōrin (1658–1715) and Katsushika Hokusai (1760–1849) were particularly favored, although the vastly different traditions, timeframes, and social contexts from which these two artists sprang were of no great interest to the Western appropriators. Freer's Sōtatsu works might easily be categorized within that eclectic attitude, perhaps as part of the larger romance with Kōrin and Hokusai—without peer in the West but seen as *déclassé* by Japanese sophisticates.

The incurious observer would have been mistaken. There is no question that Freer was deeply influenced by his supreme tutor in taste, James McNeill Whistler, and searched for visual unities and harmonies between disparate cultures throughout his collecting life. Evidence suggests, however, that he acquired art based on the best available information and careful visual analysis. By 1906, Freer had cultivated a circle of advisors and confidants who, while generally in sympathy with a philosophy of the universal harmonies of great art, espoused a rigorous connoisseurship that attempted to honor and understand indigenous conventions. After his first visit to Freer's Detroit home, Fenollosa wrote to his host:

> Next to your friends, the joy was in your rare works of art. In your home one takes a perpetual bath in the Fine and Beautiful. Koyetsu and Whistler and Thayer and Rosetti are spiritual brothers, singers of supreme utterance. As the old Chinese said of his garden, "In this open pavilion I make wise men my friends."[4]

Sixteen years earlier, Fenollosa had sent a detailed and politely scathing message to European aesthetes in his review of Louis Gonse's study of Japanese painting.[5] His claim to authority was

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7.1
Folding Screens Mounted with Poem Cards from the Shinkokin wakashū, detail. Japan, ca. 1624–37. Tawaraya Sōtatsu (act. ca. 1600–40). Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558–1637), calligrapher. Freer Gallery of Art, F1902.195-196 (cat. 25).

7.2
Charles Lang Freer (1854–1919). Freer|Sackler Archives.

7.3
Ernest Fenollosa (1853–1908). Freer|Sackler Archives.

a rigorous, *in situ* examination of the whole Japanese visual tradition, not simply the pieces that had enjoyed Western distribution. Careful to praise the elderly Gonse, young Fenollosa, already in his long and productive period of residence in Japan, attacked the disproportionality of the older man's views, for example, bridling at the notion of an equivalency between a courtly Kōrin and plebian Hokusai. Fenollosa espoused the careful consideration of a Japanese-produced schema of categorization and valuing, rather than theorizing on very limited evidence.[6]

Whistler, in turn, linked the marbled elegance of ancient Greece with the products of Hokusai's brushwork in his famous Ten O'Clock Lecture at Prince's Hall in Piccadilly on February 20, 1885: "... the story of the beautiful is already complete—hewn in the marbles of the Parthenon, and broidered, with the birds, upon the fan of Hokusai at the foot of Fusihama." His penchant for hyperbole aside, the artist was extremely successful thanks to his careful mining of Japanese compositions to revitalize and redirect his own painting program, which lent an interesting authority to his statement. With Freer, Fenollosa, and even Whistler, separating the cant of the period from the careful homework is enlightening.

"For Koyetsu and Sotatsu are all baked in the same kiln"

Freer was neither casual nor aggrandizing when he referred to his newly acquired Sōtatsu screens as "very important." From very early in his Japanese collecting career, he had been immersed in the study of ceramics; the works of Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558–1637) and Ogata Kenzan (1663–1743) held special sway. But within the context of the vessels, their lineage and interrelationships, painted works by Kōrin and Sōtatsu began to attract his attention.[7]

His substantial interaction with Kobayashi, the source of the two great Sōtatsu screens mentioned above, an earlier collaborative scroll by Kōetsu and Sōtatsu (fig. 7.4, cat. 21), and a long list of other works were complemented by a parallel, though ultimately derailed, relationship with dealer Matsuki Bunkyō (1867–1940).[8] Freer's early and sustained interest in Kōetsu's pottery and lacquerware productions is amply recorded in his extensive correspondence between 1896 and 1911. His sources were multiple; dealers like Matsuki, Yamanaka and Co., Siegfried Bing, and others provided him with both authentic and aspirational examples said to be by the master.

Accompanying this extensive list of vessels were key works by Kōetsu—calligraphy or calligraphy and painting. Of particular note is a pair of screens Freer acquired from Matsuki in 1902 (figs. 7.1, 7.5, 7.6, cat. 25) that depict an array of thirty-six poetry cards (*shikishi*) displaying autumnal poems from the *Shinkokin wakashū (New Anthology of Poems Past and Present)*, a poetry anthology produced in 1205, floating on a background of woven reed curtains (*sudare*) and flowers of the four seasons. The view, from the interior into a garden, shimmers with a burnished gold.

7.4
Poems from the Kokin wakashū , detail. Japan, early 1600s. Tawaraya Sōtatsu (ca. 1600–40). Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558–1637), calligrapher. Freer Gallery of Art, F1903.309 (cat. 21).

The extant correspondence concerning these screens—a sequence of three letters exchanged in the last week of October 1902—details Matsuki's gracious approach to historical instruction. He provided what must have been the then-known general facts about the artist and the Kōetsu–Sōtatsu relationship. Freer's opinions were clear, nuanced, and more than occasionally at variance with his dealer's. His curiosity and prescience played out against Matsuki's more orthodox notions of authorship. Freer wrote:

> I also now had a chance to study the pair of Koyetsu screens. They certainly are extremely beautiful, but the more carefully I examine them, the more convinced I become that they are nearer to the work of Sotatsu. I have examined even the application of color as seen in the foliage of the plants, etc., and I believe that in the end, we will feel that they approximate more closely to the work of Sotatsu than they do to that of Koyetsu. However, it makes no difference who did them. They are certainly wonderful; and in writing you my opinion, I do so not for the purpose of changing your opinion in the slightest, but simply to let you know how they impress me. You will remember that when I first saw them, I said they seemed very much like Sotatsu's work. Well, the more I see them, the stronger becomes the conviction. When you are next here, we will have a good chance to see them alongside of other Koyetsu and Sotatsu work. And what a good time we will have![9]

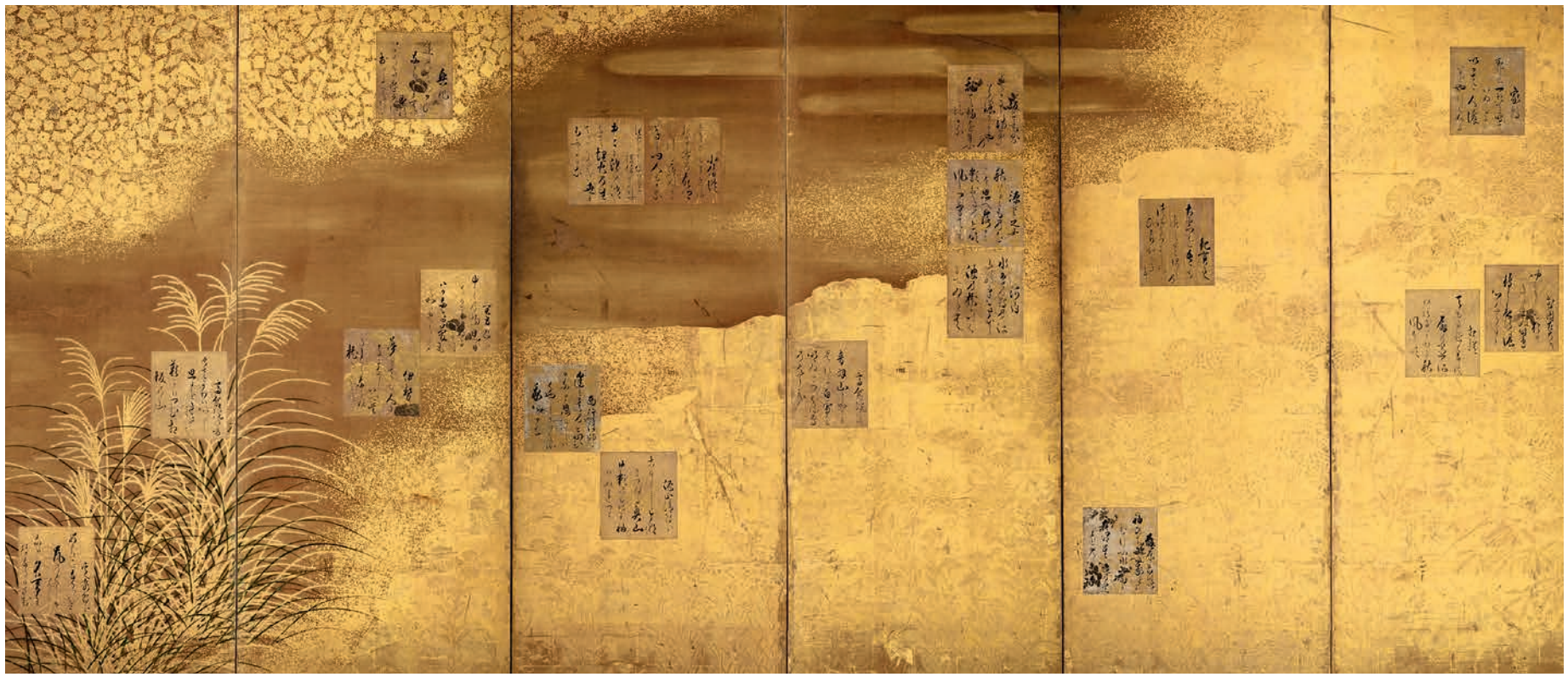
Matsuki responded:

> Koyetsu lived in Takagamine when Sotatsu was young and gay artist … from the province of Noto near Kaga. It may be that the screen was painted by Sotatsu, but [the] old man must have put gold mist and powder on the screen.... Koyetsu's teacher for painting was Yusho who learned from Ko Eitoku. But Sotatsu's first aim was Ko Eitoku then Gukei Sumiyoshi [head of the Sumiyoshi school; here, Matsuki provided a diagrammatic explanation of the proposed lineage]. So it is not right for you or anybody think that screen is not by Koyetsu. For Koyetsu and Sotatsu are all baked in same kiln and of course of course they resemble. You know Korin's great-grandmother [was the] older sister of Koyetsu, and Korin was earnest follower of Sotatsu and Koyetsu. I just wanted to show how close they are all.
>
> My opinion is that the rank Koyetsu held at that time was higher than Sotatsu. Koyetsu was old man of 70–78 (he died at age 81), when Sotatsu was not over 35 or 40. They could not have worked together … I know Koyetsu never said to Sotatsu,"You draw floral decoration, and I will put mysterious gold."
>
> You know Koyetsu never did "mischievous pleasure."[10]

And Freer replied:

7.5, 7.6
Folding Screens Mounted with Poem Cards from the Shinkokin wakashū, details and full screens (see fig. 7.1, cat. 25).

7.5



> The Japanese mind develops very early (witness your own), and it seems to me that young Sotatsu was just clever enough to have worked upon the screens far enough to excite the admiration of Koyetsu, and then, after filling the old man thoroughly full of sake, so as to get him at his strongest point of finish, he induced him to pronounce his benediction by powdering the clouds, and contributing the superbly decorated sheets, which completed what is perhaps as fine a pair of screens as one would find in a month's sojourn.
>
> Perhaps, when you shall have seen the screens in their present surroundings, where they look extremely well, you will find in the work additional inspiration for enthusiasm. If you do not, I shall bake you in the kiln of Freer, and I am sure that will result in your seeing things more as I do.[11]

It is clear from Matsuki's comments that much was known about Kōrin's blood relationship to Kōetsu. The dealer speculated about Sōtatsu's stylistic predecessors as he identified the somewhat improbable lineage of Kaihō Yūshō (1533–1615), Kanō Eitoku (1543–1590), and Sumiyoshi Gukei (1631–1705). Matsuki's sense of what might have been possible within the Japanese hierarchical system made him hedge his bets against the notion of Sōtatsu as painter. In addition, he offered

7.6

some instruction about the Takagamine artist colony founded by Kōetsu in 1615.[12] This was perhaps the first time Freer heard about that site.

Freer, however, was playful, lively, and speculative as he embraced the idea of a real-time collaboration between Kōetsu and Sōtatsu. He discounted Matsuki's objection that "Koyetsu never did mischievous pleasure" and imagined the two men spending a rather humane and pleasant session together, with the slightly more staid Kōetsu braced by sake (see "Sōtatsu's Gold-and-Silver Paintings" by Okudaira Shunroku). Freer sought to anchor the culturally distant work in a human context. But most important, he demonstrated his careful observation of differences in style, brushwork, and application of pigment. Especially intriguing is Freer's comment that the poetry screens reminded him of other Sōtatsu works. What works might those have been? What, if anything, of comparable quality attributed to Sōtatsu was in Freer's collection before that date? This exchange suggests a notable intentionality on Freer's part. He thought he had seen enough to declare a Sōtatsu likeness. And this was several years before he purchased the two screens from Kobayashi.

By the end of 1906, Freer had assembled most of the Japanese portion of his multifaceted collection. At best, a number—notably the aforementioned works attributed to Sōtatsu and Hokusai—held an ambiguous status in the Japanese hierarchy of values. Those acquisitions, the Sōtatsu and "Sōri" paintings, apparently left their point of origin without raising much concern among Japan's arbiters of taste and protectors of patrimony. In the event, the "Sōri" screen turned out to be a major misattribution.[13] But the abundance of authentic Hokusai paintings eventually acquired by Freer could sustain that error. It would be another sixty years or more before the "waves, rocks and trees" screen (cat. 1) and its predecessor by a year, featuring a pair of dragons in clouds (cat. 38), also from Kobayashi, were accepted into the heart of the Sōtatsu canon.

The correspondence between Matsuki and Freer is deliciously descriptive evidence of a slowly developing conversation in which Japanese collectors also participated. Who was Sōtatsu? How did he relate to Kōetsu, the socially prominent, sophisticated impresario of art, master of the brush? Why were their names associated? And was the position of prestige necessarily an adequate barometer of universal talents? Productions attributed to Kōetsu—acknowledged by the first shogun, considered to be one the three great "brushes" of his era, a tea master, innovator in vessel creation, i.e., tea ware and lacquered writing paraphernalia—were seen as worthy targets for any sophisticated collector active in the Meiji era (1868–1912). The complex and reductive search to identify Sōtatsu's other, more elusive, personality clearly engaged Freer.

But at the moment that Freer and his Western colleagues were assembling their version of Japan's beauty, Japan was developing its own aesthetic laboratory of unexpected and creative juxtaposition. A key experimenter was Masuda Takashi (1848–1938), founder of the modern Mitsui conglomerate, collector, connoisseur, and stage director for a new cast of beautiful things released to the art market by the forces of rapid modernization. It was Masuda, more than any other member of the new class of Japanese industrialist collectors, who anticipated Freer's next visit to Japan with suspicion and strategy.

A Most Important Year in Japan

Freer's first visit to Japan occurred in the spring of 1895, the final stop on his around-the-world journey and the first of five visits to Japan between 1895 and 1911.[14] With no reputation as a serious collector of Japanese art, he devoted himself to an extensive tour of the country. He was a deeply curious, purposeful, and wealthy tourist. But his second visit, in 1907, was singular in import. In the intervening dozen years, Freer had emerged as a formidable figure in art and philanthropy.

The quality of his Japanese art collecting was a testimony to the availability of high-quality materials sold by Western and Japanese dealers, who established themselves in major European and American cities with an inventory high above the clichéd curio level. Kobayashi Bunshichi,

Matsuki Bunkyō, and Yamanaka Sadajirō (1866–1936)[15] were among Freer's key sources. Ernest Fenollosa was a trusted confidant between 1901, when the two men first met, and his untimely death in 1908.

When Freer docked at Kobe on April 13, 1907, he carried the influential introduction of Fenollosa, who was widely known in Japan. He also had acquired an impressive set of Japanese works and was reputed to have influential American political connections. In 1906, he had successfully negotiated the gift of his collection to the nation through the vehicle of the Smithsonian Institution. That Freer secured the strong endorsement of President Theodore Roosevelt did not go unnoticed. Roosevelt had played a key role in ending the Russo-Japanese War (1904–5), for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Thus, Freer was linked to a benevolent endorsement of Japan as an actor on the world's stage. Wealth, an astutely tended and growing collection of Japanese art, philanthropic purpose on a national scale as yet unimaginable to the Japanese, and impeccable political connections placed Charles Lang Freer in a different order than other Western collectors of Japanese art.

It is difficult to underestimate the degree of orchestration that was required between art dealers and notable collectors in anticipation of Freer's arrival. Among the emerging and powerful collectors, Hara Tomitarō (1868–1937), known by the sobriquet "Sankei," was an inspired choice as initial host. From Kobe, his agents whisked the American east to Yokohama and then to Hara's estate at Sannotani. There, Freer enjoyed several weeks of gracious hospitality and a leisurely perusal of Hara's substantial art collection. Hara's fortune derived from the silk trade. He was much junior to Masuda, but like him sought to promote Japanese art on an international scale. He had been initiated into Masuda's world of tea only recently, attending his first gathering of the Daishikai tea organization in 1903.[16] Hara facilitated the meetings with Masuda and others at various times during the 1907 visit. Freer's relationship with Hara was warm and mutually instructive, but his interactions with the older Masuda started on a much more tentative footing.

Masuda was the de facto leader of a new cultural order. It was not an unchallenged leadership, but it did represent the most thoughtful, if not disinterested, approach to understanding and preserving cultural patrimony. His generation had gathered objects scattered from the old order of daimyo holdings, harvested the substantial fruit of the Meiji government policies that broke the back of Buddhism and necessitated a massive selling off of temple treasures, and determined the value of these holdings according to the connoisseurial standards of *chanoyu*.[17]

A new schema of art history, heavily influenced by a developing Western discipline, also played a role. Seeking parity with the West, Japan wrestled with ways to fit its beauty into new categories while maintaining control over which tastes and types would be valued. This necessitated the invention of a new Japanese word—*bijutsu*—to accommodate discussion of a material culture,

which previously had been understood in terms of function and site rather than unique aesthetic qualities, stylistic analysis, and related methods.

From the last decades of the nineteenth century into the 1930s, members of this elite group recast the meanings of Japanese cultural patrimony, both for Japan and for a wider world. They had the double task of preserving and repositioning a scattered heritage while simultaneously keeping a sharp eye on Freer and other Western collectors who recognized the value of Japanese art. Their artistic interests varied, but it was the practice of *chanoyu* that became a singular locus of connoisseurship for objects removed from their original contexts and put into new ones. It is unclear to what degree Freer understood the evolution and role of Japan's cultural elite. But surely an informant as knowledgeable as Fenollosa provided an in-depth background.

A few sources suggest that Freer first met Masuda in 1895, but no documents, not even Freer's fastidious records, corroborate that fact. However, the activities of Western players in the Japanese art market were surely no secret to Masuda. No serious Japanese dealer would have risked withholding interesting intelligence from him. Masuda probably received ample clues that Freer was positioning himself as a substantial force and competitor in East Asian art collecting.

The relationship between Masuda and Freer would evolve from its frosty days in early 1907, through a dozen years of cordial interaction, and finally to Masuda's memorializing of Freer after the latter's death. It is a fascinating record of mutual passions, suspicions, and the positioning of a selectively remembered past in service of the future.

Before 1907, Freer's Japanese acquisitions had been substantial and varied. Greatest in number were ceramics by Kōetsu and his circle. Clearly, Sōtatsu was an interest as evidenced by the acquisition of the remarkable and dramatically conceived *Waves at Matsushima* and *Dragons and Clouds* screens (cats. 1, 38).

Migeon, the Louvre curator, was in Japan when he received Freer's letter announcing the purchase of the Sōtatsu and "Sōri" screens. Freer had offered to help facilitate a productive stay, but Migeon visited Masuda without the collector's assistance. The date is unclear, but surely it occurred between Migeon's September 1906 arrival in Japan and Freer's visit there the following spring. Masuda expected the French scholar to be interested in Kanō school paintings and the like, but Migeon asked to see examples of Sesshū, Kōetsu, and Sōtatsu—names that were not even well-known in Japan, explaining that "Mr. Charles Freer" had encouraged him to look for such things. Masuda was surprised that foreigners knew about Japanese art in such detail.[18] Thus, he likely knew that Freer had works by Sōtatsu, Kōetsu, and similar artists before the two men met. Surely Migeon was one of many harbingers—the others probably being Japanese dealers—who alerted Masuda that Freer was a contender.

7.7
Buddhist Luohan. Japan, mid-1300s. Freer Gallery of Art, F1904.297.

7.8
Luohan Laundering. China, 1178. Lin Tinggui (act. late 1100s). Freer Gallery of Art, F1902.224.

7.9
Rock Bridge at Tiantai Mountain. China, 1178. Zhou Jichang (act. ca. 1160–78). Freer Gallery of Art, F1907.139.

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Masuda had a number of reasons to be irritated with Freer. One reason was Freer's 1904 purchase of a twenty-one Buddhist paintings, originally housed at the Kyoto Zen temple Tōfukuji and later owned by distinguished painter Shibata Zeshin (1808–1891) (fig. 7.7). Japanese collectors had waited for the collection to come on the market during the transfer of wealth that occurred during the Meiji era, and Masuda resented Freer for getting there first.

Another issue had been simmering for more than a decade. In 1894, Fenollosa had arranged an exhibition at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, of a set of one hundred paintings then housed at Daitokuji in Kyoto. These were the images of the Five Hundred Arhats produced in Song dynasty China[19] and received much acclaim in Boston. The terms of the loan seemed to include the option to sell works, and the Museum of Fine Arts acquired ten paintings. Several paintings went unaccounted for, and in 1902 Freer purchased one from Fenollosa (fig. 7.8). In 1907 while in Japan, Freer acquired another painting from the Daitokuji *arhat* set, although the circumstances of that acquisition (fig.7.9) are unclear. These events set off a firestorm of criticism and finger pointing within Japan and were perhaps an additional irritant for Masuda.[20] Other incidents left Freer suspicious and furious. His visit had been preceded by a major event in the Japanese art world: the sale of

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7.10
Fans and Clouds over Rocks and Water. Japan, early 1600s. Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558–1637), calligrapher. Freer Gallery of Art, F1903.120-121.

works from the venerable Nara temple, Kōfukuji. The cost of significant repairs had forced the temple to liquidate a number of iconographic assets. Masuda showcased his Kōfukuji acquisitions at the Daishikai gathering on March 22, 1907, about a month prior to Freer's arrival. His brother established a Tokyo antiquities shop named Tamonten in the Nihonbashi district to assist in the dispersal of Kōfukuji items.[21] Freer described his visits to the shop as unsettling and the proprietors as untrustworthy, surely an insult by extension to Masuda as well. Other activities were obviously orchestrated to eliminate Freer as a serious market competitor. Even so, it seems that Freer and Masuda were able to converse about the former's idea for a major exhibition of Chinese and Japanese art in New York, which would expose Western audiences to high-quality art and occur outside the marketplace sphere. Freer's concern was that too much knowledge of Asian art in America was

being gleaned from works in curio shops. Despite the endorsement of US Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft, however, the project floundered.[22]

The quality of the Masuda-Freer relationship shifted dramatically and positively in the autumn of 1907 when Masuda visited the United States. Freer, as he noted in a diary entry of October 14, was in New York City, where he dined with Masuda, Fenollosa, and a Mr. Hayashi (perhaps S. Hayashi, a Kyoto dealer). Freer returned to Detroit at 8 a.m. on October 17 and recorded the 9 p.m. arrival of Masuda with a Mr. Kowaki and Dr. Takamine. The next day the Japanese contingent was with him "all day," but Freer made no mention of what was viewed or reactions. The day concluded with dinner at the Detroit Club and his guests' departure for Chicago at 11 p.m. When Masuda returned to Japan, he clearly had a salutary view of Freer's intentions and goals, because he asked his confreres to aid Freer in whatever way possible. He seemed to conclude that Japanese art was in capable hands with Freer.[23]

Only a few weeks later, in early November, Fenollosa visited Detroit and spent a week examining Freer's recently acquired works and assisting in a culling process. Freer wanted to refine his collection so it would be acceptable as a gift to the Smithsonian and the nation. It seems this was the first time Fenollosa saw the Sōtatsu waves screens. His notes from that day refer to the "Matsushima screens" and, in his notoriously illegible handwriting, he seems to indicate "better than Boston's Kōrin."[24] This was a reference to a six-fold screen modeled on the right half of the Freer screens—waves, rocks, and turbulent waters—but bearing an Ogata Kōrin signature and seal that Fenollosa acquired in 1880.[25]

Freer likely was aware of the Boston screens. As early as 1898, through third parties, Fenollosa had been selling some of his private collection to Freer. What was "recommended," what was brokered for others, and what was actually Fenollosa's is somewhat unclear. In any case, Freer collection records indicate that thirty-four works were acquired from Fenollosa between 1898 and 1906.[26]

Most of Freer's Japanese collecting was accomplished by autumn 1907, when Masuda visited Detroit. A visitor with Masuda's connoisseurial acumen presumably would have detected no threat of pillage of cultural patrimony as it applied to Freer's Kōetsu-attributed acquisitions. Of the tea bowls and lacquer, perhaps only one is generally accepted to be by Kōetsu—a black Raku tea bowl called Mino-game (F1899.34a-c), although there are a number of rather dubious ceramic attributions. In the area of calligraphy or calligraphy in concert with painting, the number grows, but not by much: two pairs of screens, one with poetry cards (*shikishi*) bearing texts from *Shinkokin wakashū* (cat. 25), and the other depicting fans swirling on a stream, also with calligraphy (fig. 7.10), as well as a set of four *fusuma* sliding door panels remounted as a handscroll featuring poems from the *Kokin wakashū* with under designs by Sōtatsu (cat. 21). Freer also was given a letter in Kōetsu's hand by a Japanese acquaintance in 1907.

Thus, while we do not know which artworks Masuda viewed at the Freer residence in autumn 1907, he did seem to recognize Freer's distinctive status among Western collectors and to engage him in the area of Kōetsu. Sōtatsu and much of the art of the later Edo period would be a matter for collectors and scholars of the mid- and later twentieth century to discuss.

Consolidation, Legacies, Memorials, and Monuments

After his visit to Detroit in November 1907, Fenollosa did not see Freer again until August 8, 1908, when they met in Munich for a day of museum touring. On September 21, 1908, Fenollosa had a fatal heart attack in London. A convert to Buddhism, he had requested to be cremated and his ashes interred at Miidera, the temple on the shores of Lake Biwa where he received his Buddhist name in 1885. Freer and others helped Fenollosa's widow prepare the internment site, with Freer donating a stone incense burner and stone vases (figs. 7.11, 7.12). Fenollosa's sudden death, and Whistler's passing in 1903, pared down the number of Freer's close confidants and served as another reminder to put things into order. Freer had already started to winnow his collection to a quality and scale that he thought fitting for a national gift.

He also introduced the camera into his collecting environment. In January 1909, Freer allowed a portion of his collection to be photographed, mostly American works but also ceramics and miscellaneous sculpture. The purpose was to produce slides for a presentation at what would later become the Detroit Institute of Arts. The photographer was Alvin Langdon Coburn (1882–1966), whose portfolio consisted of gorgeous records of mood, tonality, and texture that must have seemed Whistlerian to Freer's eye.

Coburn also took several images of the collector with his artworks, conveying the sense of an attentive connoisseur and "impresario of harmonies." Posing for posterity, Freer knelt to examine Whistler's *Venus Rising from the Sea*, with an Islamic glazed pot placed nearby (fig. 7.13). In another photograph, he looked at the camera while behind on a mantel are Whistler's *Resting* and two small bronze statuettes (fig. 7.15); one is an Egyptian piece, and the other has not been identified. Freer seemed to be asserting that his collection was not random clutter but intentional.[27] These photographs depict the persona he intended to convey to the world. In one almost-comic pose, he is on hands and knees examining a Chinese handscroll (fig. 7.14). But his efforts at authentication were because he intended his collections to live on, not as categories but "in conversation." Deeply influenced by Whistler, Freer juxtaposed the works of diverse cultures and attempted to manufacture harmonies.

In mid-May 1909, Freer departed for Europe, then Cairo, China, and Japan, where he arrived in November. This visit to Japan was brief and included time spent with Masuda. In a November 10 letter to his former business partner Colonel Frank J. Hecker, Freer effused about the beauty of

7.11
Distinguished guests at Fenollosa's memorial event. FreerISackler Archives.

7.12
Right to left: Guests included Migeon, Freer, and Masuda. FreerISackler Archives.

7.11

7.12

Kyoto's gardens, which were festooned with brightly colored maple leaves:

> What could be finer? Nothing, unless perhaps, last Sunday's pilgrimage to the tombs of Korin and Koyetsu—the former near the Komogawa [*sic*] and the latter in the Western hills on a plateau facing Takagamini [*sic*]! Tomorrow Mr. Hara of Sannotani and Baron Kuki of Tokio join me ... Later I go to visit these men in their homes and on the 24th expect to say sayonara and sail homeward on the Mongolia. What a trip I am having!"[28]

His more abbreviated travel diary confirms the visits to the two gravesites—Kōrin's at Myōkenji in north-central Kyoto and Kōetsu's at Kōetsuji at Takagamine on Kyoto's northwestern border—on Sunday, November 7, 1909.[29] Freer's "pilgrimage" suggests a particular dedication to supplement his interest in these artists with personal memories of their resting places. This visit was referenced by Takahashi Sō'an (Yoshio; 1861–1937) in his description of the beginnings of Kōetsukai, a dedicated group of collectors, tea practitioners, dealers and others interested in the legacy of Kōetsu.[30]

As the Masuda-Freer relationship progressed over the next decade, Kōetsu and his work continued to be a central focus. But not until 1914 did Masuda describe his careful study of a scroll featuring deer-figure designs (*Deer Scroll,* cat. 23) and suggest that Kōetsu was the calligrapher but not the artist. Only then did the collaboration between Kōetsu and Sōtatsu that so interested Freer come to the surface.[31]

Freer spent a week in Japan again in September 1910, on his way to China, and returned in late February 1911, staying until early April. He met several times with Masuda in late March. When he returned to Detroit, he suffered what was probably a mild stroke. It was an omen of declining

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health. He never traveled to Asia again. He focused his energies on making his collection better known and more widely available—with exhibitions at the University of Michigan, Smithsonian, Art Institute of Chicago, Metropolitan Museum of Art, and New York's Japan Society. Unfortunately, Freer was never able to organize the international exhibition in New York that he'd described to Masuda in 1907.

The correspondence between the two men continued until the spring of 1918 and was characterized by cordial bonhomie, requests for mutual personal favors, and some commentary on art. The record suggests that Masuda presumed Freer was as interested in the details of connoisseurship as he was. However, their correspondence is too thin and the details of Masuda's knowledge of Freer's collection too imprecise to draw conclusions.

News of Freer's death on September 25, 1919, traveled to Japan through multiple dealer channels. There is scant information about the reaction. Letters of condolence and other documentation that might be expected are conspicuous by their absence in the Freer Archives. Masuda's first public comments came several years later at the 1921 meeting of the Kōetsukai, where he praised Freer and his championing of Kōetsu's art and aesthetic at an international level. The group produced a memorial altar for Freer (fig. 7.17) within Kōetsuji's main worship hall and a guestbook filled with signatures of attendees. A photographic portrait of Freer was mounted as a hanging scroll and displayed in one of the teahouses at the site (fig. 7.16), which indicates the level of admiration for Freer and also the strong intention to join his personality to Kōetsu's in a concrete way.[32]

7.13
Charles Lang Freer comparing Whistler's *Venus Rising from the Sea* to an Islamic glazed pot, 1909. Photo by Alvin Langdon Coburn (1882–1966). Freer|Sackler Archives.

7.14
Freer examining a Chinese scroll, 1909. Photo by Alvin Langdon Coburn (1882–1966). Freer|Sackler Archives.

7.15
Freer with Whistler's *Resting* and two bronze Egyptian statuettes. Photo by Alvin Langdon Coburn (1882–1966). Freer|Sackler Archives.

7.16
Hanging scroll with photo of Freer displayed at Kōetsuji after his death. Freer|Sackler Archives.

7.17
Memorial altar for Freer at Kōetsuji's worship hall. Freer|Sackler Archives.

7.18
Plaque honoring Freer at Kōetsu's gravesite, Kōetsuji, Kyoto. Freer|Sackler Archives.

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Constructing a Posthumous Freer: May 8, 1930

On Friday, May 8, 1930, rain fell on Kōetsuji's carefully tended gardens in the foothills in northwestern Kyoto. A winding pathway began at the temple gateway and followed a downward route to a hedged and fenced precipice that offered an expansive view of the city below. If the day had been clear, visitors would have seen the Higashiyama range in the distance. The pathway also formed a divide between the temple's daily practice and memorializing functions: on the right side were the tea houses, and on the left, a small clearing provided the site of Kōetsu's grave.

After that Friday, the entrance to the gravesite featured something new: a large stone inset with a rectangular bronze plaque among the shrubs and a sheltering tree (fig. 7.18). The stone was secured from Mount Kurama, an ancient and legend-laden site a few miles to the north. The text on the plaque was the speech Masuda Takashi had delivered at the 1921 Kōetsukai memorial ceremony for Freer.[33] On a rock in the foreground were a cup of tea, a glass of champagne, and fruit and other delicacies. A few yards away, a caterer's tent was filled with distinguished visitors—Japanese and Western.[34]

The event was, in one sense, a gracious conclusion to the sometimes contentious but ultimately cordial Masuda-Freer relationship. It honored Freer's spirit at a site of great beauty and near the grave of an artist he much admired. In another sense, it represented a cultural entente, a moment that politely acknowledged that the true stewards of Japanese culture in the early twentieth century were a powerful combination of industrialist collectors, the heirs of the old daimyo collections, art dealers, government bureaucrats, and academics.

The US ambassador to Japan, William R. Castle Jr., gave a brief speech:

> It is a great honor to be here today at the unveiling of the beautiful monument to Mr. Freer. He ... and a few others, helped to create knowledge of Japanese art throughout the United States. It is therefore fitting in tribute to his memory that you should erect this monument to him near the grave of the great Kōetsu....[35]

The notion of graves played into the 1913 Sōtatsu exhibition in Tokyo, which was given impetus by the discovery of Sōtatsu's alleged burial site at a temple in Kanazawa (see "Sōtatsu in the 20th Century" by Furuta Ryō). *Hakamairi* (a grave visit) was the highest form of recognition. If a distinguished foreigner like Freer had the courtesy to praise and acknowledge Kōetsu, was it not Japan's duty to establish a continuing, living memorial to such a great man?

Conclusion

Japan's reception on the world stage changed greatly in the years between 1895, the year Freer first visited the country, and 1930, when his memorial at Kōetsuji was established. Japan had given notice to the Western powers when it won the 1904–5 war with Russia. It now pressed for recognition as an equal power and an expanding sphere of influence.

Cultural patrimony suggested a tranquil, introspective, and civilized interior, and in trade fairs, expositions, and art exhibitions, Japan distracted outside observers from its rapid expansion on the Asian mainland. That increasingly awkward deployment of culture as a cosmetic veneer also presented an opportunity to move Sōtatsu into the canon of great Japanese painting, both in partnership with Kōetsu and as a solo figure. Around this time, scholar Yashiro Yukio connected Hara's and Masuda's mentoring as a critical impetus for Freer's interest in Kōetsu and Sōtatsu. While Freer clearly discussed these artists with Hara and Masuda, it is abundantly clear that his major Sōtatsu purchases were made before he met these collectors in 1907.

The new perspective on Sōtatsu was not completely in place by the time of the 1930 memorial. But the absolute jewels of the artist's accomplishment—*Waves at Matsushima* and *Dragons and Clouds*—had been secured by Freer and were waiting to be discovered by a broader public. Adding Freer to Sōtatsu's hagiography was a promotional strategy that evolved through several decades.

Charles Lang Freer discovered Sōtatsu at the same time he was amassing works by Kōetsu, Kōrin, and Kenzan; significant ukiyo-e paintings; what would prove to be the motherlode of paintings by Hokusai; and examples of Buddhist iconography. However, to describe his 1905 and 1906 Sōtatsu acquisitions as part of a plan to connect a line of production from the early seventeenth to the late nineteenth century is at best anachronistic. As has been pointed out (see "Sōtatsu's Gold-and-Silver

Paintings" by Okudaira Shunroku), one reason that Sōtatsu had difficulty emerging from the shadows was his lack of affiliation with an established atelier. While that was not a handicap to a Western art collector, a powerful Japanese penchant for legitimization begged for the creation of a recognized structure. Freer was one of several tools employed to do so.

NOTES

1 Letter dated October 18, 1906, Charles Lang Freer to Ernest Fenollosa, Charles L. Freer Papers, Freer|Sackler Archives.
2 For biographical background see Yamaguchi Sei'ichi, "Kobayashi Bunshichi and his Achievements," *Saitama University Bulletin* 6 (1987).
3 Letter dated October 19, 1906, Charles Lang Freer to Ernest Fenollosa, Charles L. Freer Papers, Freer|Sackler Archives.
4 Letter dated March 24, 1901, Ernest Fenollosa to Charles Lang Freer, Charles L. Freer Papers, Freer|Sackler Archives.
5 Louis Gonse, *L'art Japonais* (Paris: Imprimerie de A. Quantin, 1883); http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k6373975m. For an especially informative essay on Gonse, see Timothy Clark, "The Intuition and the Genius of Decoration" in *Rimpa Art: From the Idemitsu Collection, Tokyo*, ed. Yūzo Yamane et al. (London: British Museum Press, 1998), 68–81.
6 Ernest Fenollosa, *Review of the chapter in painting in Gonse's "L'art Japonais"* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Co., 1885); http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100605935.
7 See Richard L. Wilson, *The Potter's Brush: The Kenzan Style in Japanese Ceramics* (Washington, DC: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery: 2001). Wilson's essay "Between Kenzan and Freer" connects the ceramic work of Kōetsu and Kenzan to Freer's gradual interest in Sōtatsu. The late nineteenth-century fascination with the maker-identified "work of art" was seen in Freer's attempts to rescue Sōtatsu from those otherwise ascribed to Kōetsu.
8 A useful biography of Matsuki is Frederic A. Sharf et al., *"A Pleasing Novelty": Bunkio Matsuki and the Japan Craze in Victorian Salem* (Salem: Peabody & Essex Museum, 1993).
9 Letter dated October 25, 1902, Charles Lang Freer to Matsuki Bunkyō, Charles L. Freer Papers, Freer|Sackler Archives.
10 Letter dated October 27, 1902, Matsuki Bunkyō to Charles Lang Freer, Charles L. Freer Papers, Freer|Sackler Archives.
11 Letter dated October 29, 1902, Charles Lang Freer to Matsuki Bunkyō, Charles L. Freer Papers, Freer|Sackler Archives.
12 See Fumiko Cranston, "Takagamine Colony," in *The Arts of Hon'ami Kōetsu, Japanese Renaissance Master* (Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2000), 120–24.
13 Freer's Hokusai "Sōri" screens (F1906.233-234) have since been reclassified as the work of Hishikawa Sōri (Sōri III, active late 18th–early 19th century.) At least one other work thought to be by Hokusai was acquired by Freer under the Sōri attribution and later reclassified.
14 Some count the 1910 and 1911 visits as one, with Japan as the point of entry to and departure after a long visit to China that overlapped the two years.
15 See Thomas Lawton, "Yamanaka Sadajirō: Advocate for Asian Art," *Orientations*, January 1995.

16 The friendship between the two men was based in part on Masuda's respect for Hara's eye. Remarking on either his connoisseurship or his artistic talent, or both, Masuda noted in his memoirs that "Hara really knew painting." Christine Guth, *Art, Tea and Industry* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 157.

17 *Chanoyu* is the Japanese practice of drinking powdered green tea and appreciating the objects used to do so.

18 Recounted in Matsuda Nobuo, *Masuda Don'ō wo meguru kyūnin no sukishatachi* (Tokyo: Ribun Shuppan, 2002), 273. A passage in a letter from Migeon to Freer dated June 24, 1906 ("Enfin, avez-vous des recommendations utiles à me donner pour le Japon?") seems to corroborate this story. Charles L. Freer Papers, Freer|Sackler Archives.

19 See Tokyo Bunkazai Kenkyūjo, ed. *Daitokuji denrai gohyaku rakanzu* (Nara City: Nara National Museum, 2014).

20 It is worth noting that Buddhist works were central to the conversation. A promoter of evolutionary thought within tea circles, Masuda encouraged the inclusion of Buddhist items beyond the traditional uses of works produced within Zen Buddhism, the birthplace of tea practice.

21 *Don'ō no me: Masuda Don'ō no bi no sekai* (Tokyo: The Gotoh Museum, 1998), 167.

22 See Helen Nebek Tomlinson, "Charles Lang Freer, Pioneer Collector of Oriental Art" (PhD diss., Case Western Reserve University, 1979), 517–19.

23 Guth, 180–81.

24 Notes taken by Fenollosa before Freer's collection in Detroit, November 4–11, 1907. Charles L. Freer Papers, Freer|Sackler Archives.

25 In 1886 Charles Goddard Weld (1857–1911), a wealthy Boston physician, spent time in Japan with fellow Bostonians Fenollosa and William Sturgis Bigelow (1850–1926). Under Fenollosa's tutelage, Weld began building what would become a central part of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston's extraordinary Japanese collection. That very year, 1886, Fenollosa sold the Kōrin screen to Weld. After Weld's death, the painting entered Boston's holdings as part of the Fenollosa-Weld Collection.

26 In the group of works Fenollosa sold to Freer, the dominant type is ukiyo-e and nothing that resembles anything from the Kōetsu lineage. Though it was not something that he sold to Freer, Fenollosa was enthused by the two-fold screen *Coxcombs, Maize, and Morning Glories* (cat. 51), included in his posthumously published *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art* under Kōetsu's name. If nothing else, Fenollosa furthers the general period understanding that Kōetsu was a talented painter.

27 These works are now part of the Freer Gallery collections: *Venus Rising from the Sea* (F1903.174), Islamic glazed pot (1905.61), *Resting* (1902.176), Egyptian sculpture (1907.1).

28 Letter dated November 10, 1909, Charles Lang Freer to Frank J. Hecker, Charles L. Freer Papers, Freer|Sackler Archives.

29 Both Kōetsu and Korin were interred at Nichiren Buddhist temples. Kōetsu's home temple was Honpouji in Kyoto, and Kōetsuji was dedicated as a temple in the Nichiren sect in the mid-1560s. Kōrin, who died in 1716, was buried at Kōzen'in within the central Nichiren temple complex of Myōkenji.

30 See Takahashi Yoshio, "The birth of Kōetsu-kai in Takagamine," in *Hōki no ato* (Shuhōen Shuppan, 1936). So'an was a member of the Mitsui inner circle and wrote a tea diary (*chakaiki*) column for the newspaper *Jiji Shinpō*. His articles spanning the years 1911–19 were compiled into the five-volume *Tōto chakaiki* (Tankōsha, 1989).

31 Masuda displayed a fragment of the *Deer Scroll* at the fifth Kōetsukai held on November 13, 1919, shortly after Freer's death, when he hosted a *chanoyu* at the main teahouse Taikyo'an. The gathering is recounted in Takahashi, *Tōto chakaiki*, vol. 5, 300–306.

32 The list of displays at the 1921 Kōetsukai gathering is recorded in Oda Eichi et al., eds., *Kōetsukai no ayumi* (Kyoto: Kōetsukai, 1981), 207.

33 Cut into the stone was Freer's name in both English and Japanese. A single line of small script, the name Masuda Takashi, served as a bridge between Freer's name and the plaque, which was signed with the endorsing name of Ōtani Sonyu (1886–1939). Sonyu was a Buddhist proselytizer, national politician, and colonial administrator, who embodied the collaborative web of religion, culture, and Japan's muscular expansionism in northeast Asia. That he served as the head of the Kōestukai and practiced *chanoyu* suggests that Japanese culture had moved to yet another stage, as an implicit guarantor that the highest civilized principles informed Japan's national actions and that those principles had been recognized by Freer.

34 The ceremony opened with remarks by the mayor of Kyoto, Toki Kahei (1875–1946) and Dobashi Kahei (dates unknown), a Japanese antiquities dealer credited as the force behind the founding of the Kōetsukai. The event, including the services of a professional photographer, was arranged by Yamanaka Sadajirō.

35 *The Osaka Mainichi & The Tokyo Nichi Nichi, Osaka*, Saturday, May 10, 1930. At the end of the month, Castle ended his brief tenure as ambassador. He had arrived in Tokyo with the awkward assignment to follow, perhaps influence, the contentious debate among Japanese policy makers about the Five Powers naval armament treaty being negotiated in London. Although Japan ultimately signed the treaty, the military strongly protested the limitations imposed on the country. Just a few weeks after the Kōetsuji ceremony, Castle's farewell events in Tokyo were marred by public snubs, threats of resignation from senior Japanese military officers, and even the ritual suicide of a naval officer.