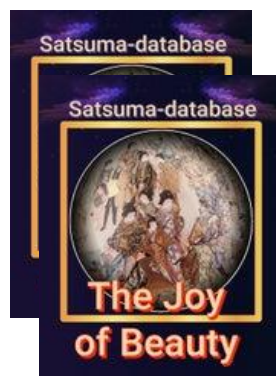


## The Wonderful World of Satsuma

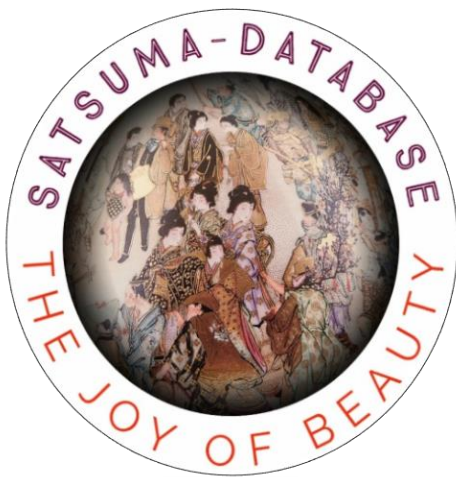


UPDATE JANUARI 2024

# The Wonderful world of Satsuma

## IMAGES ON SATSUMA

The attraction of Satsuma earthenware is partly in the sometimes breathtaking refinement of the paintwork. Besides of the quality of the brushwork there is also a lot to see what is on it, and much of the charm of Satsuma yaki can be traced back to the exotic attraction that it exerts on Western eyes. Not coincidentally of course because Satsuma pottery from the Meiji era was to a large extent intended to charm the west. Originally, these products were scarcely decorated, because for the Japanese people the beauty of Satsuma earthenware was in the beautiful body of the earthenware itself. The ivory coloured of the clay, deepened by the fine-grained crackle of the glaze did not need more as just a sparing decoration what was in perfect balance with the ivory-white of the body.



But in Europe and the United States, in Early Meiji period one was excited and full admiration about Japan, a country what in these years started to reveal itself after centuries of isolation. The west wanted to see this exotic Japan, and Satsuma producers merely responded to the demand from the west, portraying it in the way they wanted it: glamorous geishas, noble warriors, gods and dragons in mysterious, but enchanting landscapes were painted according to western criteria of beauty, and by applying new learned techniques like the use of fluid gold or washed enamels. From the beginning of the Meiji period, we see an increase of this kind of paintwork which sometimes completely covered the body itself, and in a style what is much different as seen in the period before. It is this pictorial richness of Satsuma ware what explains much of its appeal, and the stunning way in which that exotic, arcadian and archaic Japan was depicted is still a source of joy for the Satsuma collector.

This data file tries to give an impression of the way in which ancient Japan was presented to the West as well as other representations what can be found on Satsuma earthenware.

- Tales and Myths
- Gods, Demons and Mythological creatures
- Celebration, Processions and Festivities
- Children at Play
- Samurai- World
- Enchanting nature
- Daily life in old Japan
- A view of the World outside

# 1. Tales, Legends and Myths

Legends or monogatari (物語) as it is called in Japanese language, are always fictional stories, even when it is based on a historical event. Since these monogatari are grained deeply in Japanese culture and society, it is not surprising that many of these stories were also depicted on Satsuma products. But these tales may be embedded in the cultural awareness of every Japanese, this is certainly not the case for Westerners. We grew up with another framework of tales and legends, and looking at a beautiful picture painted on a Satsuma-saucer we are not able to recognize the story what is behind it. Unfortunately, because it should give an extra dimension in the appreciation of the work itself, and a deeper understanding of the rich culture Japan has to offer.

It is impossible to give an overview of all the stories that you can encounter on Satsuma products. It is also not useful if it is not linked to a concrete example. This data file therefore assumes the opposite: It shows a Satsuma object on which a story is depicted and gives a brief description of that story. The number of examples is still small, but will increase as time goes on. New examples are therefore very welcome. If you think you can contribute a new story to this database, please contact us: [info@satsuma-database.nl](mailto:info@satsuma-database.nl).

- The tale of Kaguya, the moonprincess
- The tale of the fisherman Urashima Taro
- The tale of Tokimasa and the goddess Benten
- The legend of emperor Jimmu
- The story of lady Tokiwa
- The story of Chushingura
- The Story of Kinko riding on a carp
- The Story of Ōta Dōkan
- The Tale of Saitō Musashibō Benkei
- The death of the historical Buddha
- The story of Minamoto no Yoshitsune
- The legend of Princess Joruri
- The Story of Momotaro
- The Tale of Hikaru Genji
- The Heike Monogatari
- The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove
- The story of the Cowherd and the weaver



## The tale of Kaguya, the moonprincess



This beautiful 45 cm charger depicts Princess Kaguya, also known as the moon princess. It's a scene from the Tale of the Bamboo Cutter, one of the oldest Japanese narratives, dating from the 10th century. As a baby she was found inside the stalk of a glowing bamboo plant by an old and childless bamboo-cutter. The old man and his wife raised her as their own child, and called her Kaguya. The little girl grew up and became a very beautiful young woman. Her beauty was so extraordinary that several important men and samurai warriors wanted to marry her, but she turned them all down. And even the Emperor of Japan, the Mikado, came to see Kaguya, fell in love and asked her to marry him. But, Kaguya rejected his request for marriage as well, telling him that she was not of his country and thus could not go to the palace with him. Her parents were concerned about her behaviour and eventually she confessed to them that she was a princess from the moon and must return to the moon again.

The charger shows us Princess Kaguya, sitting in a winter forest, in the light of the full moon. She is surrounded by the men who wanted to marry her, but she has turned her back to them, symbolizing that she cannot marry them, because she is a princess of the moon. The charger is unmarked but painted by a great master. It dates from the 19th century, probably around 1870. The size and the quality of the charger makes it likely that it was made on command.

## The tale of the fisherman Urashima Taro



This set of 36cm tall relievases by Ryokuzan shows us two large panels in "Mezzo Relievo" with border surrounds. The panels depicts the tale of the fisherman Urashima Tarō, an old fairy tale, with several versions. Urashima is a fisherman who is rewarded for rescuing a turtle, and carried on its back to the Dragon Palace (Ryūgū-jō) which lies beneath the sea. There he is entertained by the princess Otohime as reward. Urashima decides to return to his home after three years and was given by the princess a memento box, which he should not open. When he arrives home, he found out that not three years, but 700 years has passed since he has left his hometown. He cannot restrain the temptation to open the box, which he was cautioned not to open, and changed into an old man. In some versions the tale ends with Urashima Tarō transforming into a crane, and his wife reverting back to the form of a turtle, the two thereafter revered as myōjin (Shinto deities). On the first panel we see Urashima on the turtle, at the horizon the contours of the seacastle. The reverse panel shows us Urashima and a crane, symbolic for his transformation into a crane.

## The tale of Tokimasa and the goddess Benten



This 36cm charger by Yamaguchi Kogetsu shows the story of the warrior Hojo Tokimasa in a cave near Enoshima, the name of an islet near Fujisawa city. The legend tells that in 1190, five years after a Samurai government was established in Kamakura, Tokimasa who worked as an assistant of the Shogun confined himself on Enoshima for the period of 21 days. He prayed for his family's prosperity and received evidence of God's acceptance of his prayers in the form of three scales left by the dragon. Benten appeared to him in the form of a white dragon, promising Tokimasa that his wishes would be answered and leaving behind three scales, which are the origin of the crest of the Hojo family. The pitcher shows Tokimasa dressed in full armour with his tiger-skinned scabbard, brandishing a blazing torch as the Goddess Benten, standing beside a dragon, appears before him to grant his prayers.

## The legend of emperor Jimmu



On this unmarked Edo-period plate we see Amaterasu, goddess of the sun, bestowing her blessings upon Jimmu, Japan's first Emperor. In her hand the distinctive longbow as Jimmu's weapon of choice. In Shinto belief, Jimmu was a direct descendant of the sun goddess, Amaterasu.

According to the *Kojiki* (a record of Japan's earliest mythology) and *Nihon Shoki* (a work including the lives of the earliest Emperors as well as the Creation myths) the emperor Jimmu was born on February 13, 711 BCE and died on March 11, 585 BCE. As the legend goes, Jimmu and his older brothers were born in Takachiho, the southern part of Kyūshū (modern day Miyazaki prefecture). His brother, Itsuse no Mikoto, initially led the migration and brought the clan to the east. During his travels, Itsuse no Mikoto was killed in a battle at the hands of a local chieftain, Nagasunehiko. Jimmu took over and with the guidance of a three legged crow, Yatagarasu, reached Yamato where they again battled Nagasunehiko but won this time. After this battle, the remaining clans of Honshu surrendered and declared their allegiance to the victor. Jimmu also became the official guardian of the *Sanshu no Jingi* (the Three Sacred Treasures of Japan, the symbols of Japan's mythological past) handed down through Ninigi from Amaterasu herself.

During the Tokugawa bakufu, as the military ruled Japan and the Shoguns exercised power, the Emperor was still revered and remained the unquestionable sovereign until only at the end of World War II when his divinity was renounced.

## The story of lady Tokiwa



Two lobbed chargers and a vase of Tokiwa Gozen. Tokiwa Gozen, also known as Lady Tokiwa, was a Japanese noble woman from the 12th century, and the wife or concubine of Minamoto no Yoshitomo, the head of the Minamoto clan. With him she had three sons. Lady Tokiwa is here depicted during a war between different clans, referred to as the Heiji Rebellion. Tokiwa had to flight through the snow, protecting her three young sons within her robes. From her flight through the snow was made in 1842 a famous blockwood print by Utagawa Kuniyoshi, what must have inspired the Satsuma artists. The lobbed bowls are not signed, the vase is signed Nishida.



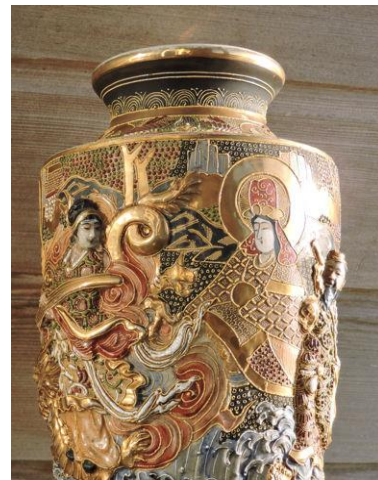
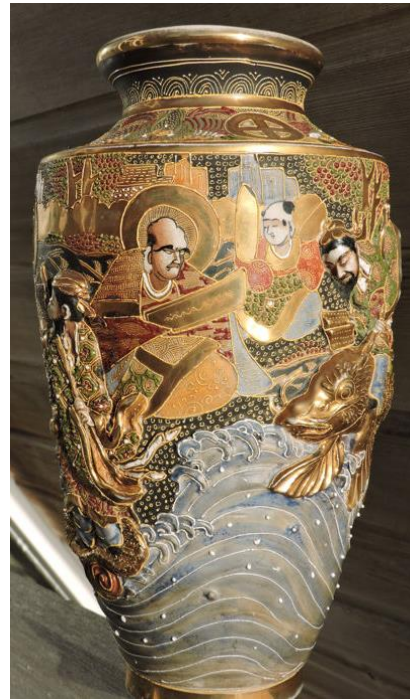
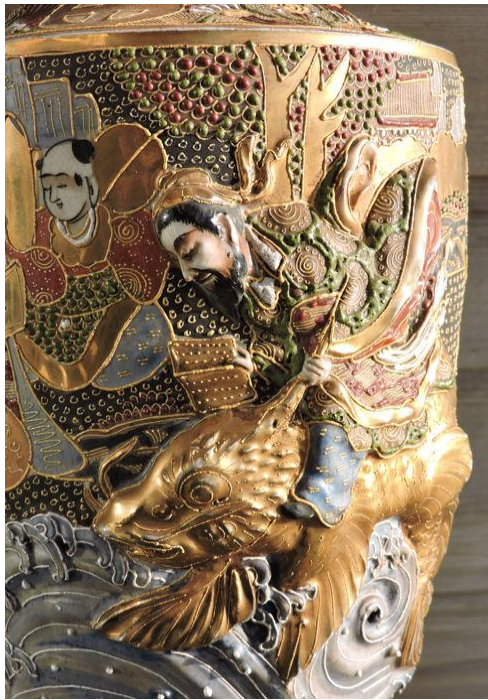
## The story of Chushingura



The historical basis for the narrative begins in 1701. The ruling shōgun Tokugawa Tsunayoshi placed Asano Takumi-no-kami Naganori, the daimyō of Akō, in charge of a reception of envoys from the Imperial Court in Kyoto. He also appointed the protocol official (kōke) Kira Kōzuke-no-suke Yoshinaka to instruct Asano in the ceremonies. On the day of the reception, at Edo Castle, Asano drew his short sword and attempted to kill Kira. His reasons are not known, but many purport that an insult may have provoked him. For this act, he was sentenced to commit seppuku, but Kira did not receive any punishment. The shogunate confiscated Asano's lands (the Akō Domain) and dismissed the samurai who had served him, making them rōnin.

Nearly two years later, Ōishi Kuranosuke Yoshio, who had been a high-ranking samurai in the service of Asano, led a group of forty-six/forty-seven of the rōnin (some discount the membership of one for various reasons). They broke into Kira's mansion in Edo, captured and executed Kira, and laid his head at the grave of Asano at Sengaku-ji. They then turned themselves in to the authorities, and were sentenced to commit seppuku, which they all did on the same day that year. Ōishi is the protagonist in most retellings of the fictionalized form of what became known as the Akō incident, or, in its fictionalized form, the Treasury of Loyal Retainers (Chūshingura).

## The Story of Kinko riding on a carp



Kinkō (子英), the Taoist Immortal, riding on a carp, vase with reliefdecor signed Nikkozan, 36 cm.

The vase depicts the Daoist sage Kinko -- also known as Sennin in Japanese or Sennin Kinko. A Sennin is a person who has realized the way of Tao, and can live to be a thousand years old while retaining the appearance of a youth or child. Kinko was an artist whose specialty was painting fish, and he would neither kill nor eat his aquatic friends. To reward his virtue, the "Dragon King" invited Kinko to visit him in his palace in the sea world and sent forth a giant carp to carry him across the water. On his way back, Sennin Kinko encounters Kannon, the god or goddess of mercy and gives him/her a scroll that illustrates the Buddhist principle of protecting the lives of all living creatures. This is said to demonstrate the merits of Kinko as he reaches the divine. On the vase we see Kinko riding the carp among the waves while at the other side is a representation of Kannon and other gods and rakan.

## The Story of Ōta Dōkan



Ōta Dōkan (1432-1486) was a Japanese samurai, poet and Buddhist monk. But he is best known as the architect and builder of Edo Castle (now the Imperial Palace in Tokyo) and he is considered the founder of the castle city around that fort, which became Edo / Tokyo. At the end of the 16th century, Edo Castle of Dōkan was chosen as the new home of Tokugawa Ieyasu, who brought the seat of his clan companies to Kantō. With the founding of the Tokugawa shogunate in the early 17th century, Edo Castle became the center of the shogunate government. After the restoration of Meiji, the castle became an imperial palace.

Dōkan was also well read in classical (Heian period) literature and a skilled poet.

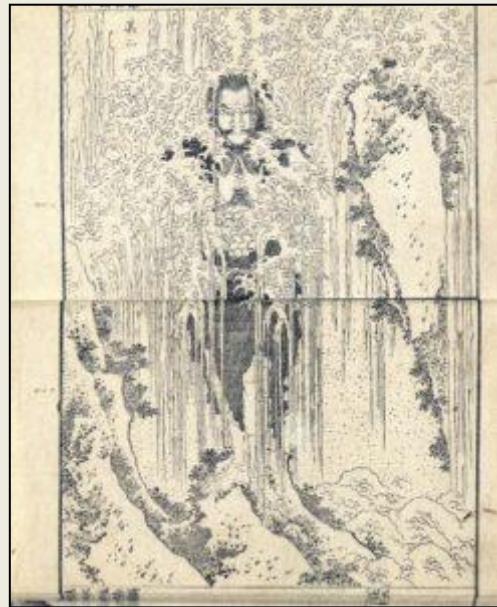
On this bowl Ōta Dōkan is more depicted as a poet instead of the warrior he also was, sitting in front of Edo Castle which can be seen in the background.

## The Tale of Saitō Musashibō Benkei



Musashibō Benkei (1155–1189) lived during the Genpei wars. His appearance is described as that of a bogey man who could break someone's skull with one hand. Despite his reputation, Benkei was peaceful. As a young man he joined a monastery, but that proved not challenging enough and he was banned from the monastery because of his wild behavior. He then built his own one-man monastery for the Buddha, just beyond the Gojō bridge in the center of Kyōto, and settled on the bridge as the temple's protector. Once that temple was built on the Gojō bridge in Kyōto, a series of battles were fought. Benkei stood on the bridge every night and stopped 999 samurai who were not allowed to continue if they could not defeat Benkei. Benkei collected the swords and armors of the defeated samurai. However, in his 1000th fight, Benkei lost in a rather exuberant fight against Minamoto no Yoshitsune. Benkei was very impressed and spent his entire life serving as a follower of Yoshitsune. Benkei is still a beloved character in Japan today and can often be found in various media such as manga, theater pieces, nō theater, kabuki theater, anime, wood prints, and so on. On this vase from the private collection of the Dutch painter Mesdag Benkei is depicted in several scenes of his life and tales.

## The story of Endo Morito



This vase from the private collection of the Dutch painter Mesdag depicts the monk Mongaku Shonin in repentance beneath a waterfall, with Buddhist figures looking down at the event. The design is based on the legend of Endo Morito (1139-1203), the secular name of Mongaku, who was originally a samurai guard of the imperial family in Kyoto. In his late teenage years, he fell in love with Kesa, the beautiful wife of his samurai colleague Watanabe Wataru. She rejected his persistent entreaties until one night she agreed to receive him in her house at night, where she said he would find her husband asleep in a room and could kill him. However, too late, Morito realized that the person he killed was actually the lady herself, who had put herself in her husband's place to save her honour. Morito repented his evil ways and became a monk using the new name of Mongaku. As a harsh penance, he prayed under the waterfall of Nachi in Kumano (present-day Mie and Wakayama prefectures) in the freezing winter for twenty-one days, reciting incantations to the deity Fudo Myoo (Sanskrit Acala) . It is said that at the point of death, Mongaku was rescued by the two attendants of Fudo Myoo, Kongara (Sanskrit Kimkara) and Seitaka (Sanskrit Cetaka), so that he could complete the full three weeks of austerities. The design is taken from an illustration by Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) in *Ehon sakigake* (Picture-book of Warrior Heroes) published in 1836.

## Nehan zu: The death of the historical Buddha



The story of the Buddha's death and final achievement of enlightenment is filled with both lingering sadness and joy. Having reached old age, he had his young disciple Ananda prepare a place for him between twin sala trees in the grove in Kushinagara. He then lay down on his right side with his head facing north, and his followers, along with a variety of supernatural beings, birds, beasts, and even his mother (descending from heaven at the upper right), gathered around him. They all grieved: "The light of the world is now put out." Even the plant kingdom was affected—the sala trees bloomed out of season and the forest was strangely silent. The Buddha addressed his followers: "Grieve not! The time is one for joy; no call for sorrow or for anguish here. No more shall I receive a body, all future sorrow now, forever, done away; it is not meant for you, on my account, forevermore, to encourage any anxious fear." (Buddhacharita 1948-67).

Here, Buddha's divine nature is represented by his large size relative to that of his attendants. The vivid portrayal of grief-stricken animals is unique to Japanese paintings of this event and reflects a particular sensitivity to nature's all-encompassing quality.

The story is depicted on this rectangular dish, within a stylised border, made by Kaizan. Length 24.25cm, width 15cm. The story of Buddha's death and enlightenment is depicted many times in paintings and scrolls, this artwork seems to be almost almost a copy of a 15th century scroll by an anonymous maker.

## The story of Minamoto no Yoshitsune



A 39cm charger, painted by Sozan for Kinkozan company, the centre depicting Minamoto no Yoshitsune and his retainers on the shores of a lake, waiting to board an approaching ship that will take them to Ezo.

Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159 - May 17, 1189) was the son of Minamoto no Yoshitomo, who was defeated and killed during a civil war by Kiyomoro. Kiyomori took the beloved mother of Yoshitsune and Kyoto's most beautiful lady as a concubine, but he kept Yoshitsune and his half-brothers alive, and they grew up with Kiyomori as father figure. At a young age, however, he had to spend a Buddhist monastery, just like his brothers. Here Yoshitsune became aware of his Genji (Minamoto) descent. Instead of training in the teachings of Buddha, he developed his martial art techniques here. His Buddhist name was Shanao. During the Genpei war between Minamoto (under Yoritomo) and Taira (under Taira no Kiyomori) Yoshitsune was the most important general. In 1184, he achieved an important victory in the Battle of Ichinotani, and in 1185, the Taira clan was defeated after Yoshitsune's victory in the Battle of Dan-no-ura.

However, Yoshitsune's growing popularity was seen by Yoritomo as a threat to his own position. Yoshitsune was forced to flee to Hiraizumi where he was betrayed and forced to commit suicide. Another version of the legend says they managed to escape to Ezo (present day Hokkaido) where they were worshiped by Ainu as Gikyo Daimyojin (Great God Yoshitsune).

## The legend of Princess Joruri



This deep dish made by Togo Jukatsu depicts a scene from the love story between Ushiwakamaru (the young Minamoto no Yoshitsune) and Princess Joruri also known as Jorurihime. Here, Ushiwakamaru performs a serenade to Princess Joruri on his flute, accompanied by Jorurihime's koto.

The legend of Princess Joruri is a tragic love story between Minamoto no Yoshitsune and Princess Joruri, the princess of a chief in Yahagi, Mikawa (now Okazaki town). Yoshitsune falls in love with Princess Joruri on his way from Kyoto to Oshu to revive the Minamoto clan, but leaves her with the flute "Usuzumi" when he leaves for Oshu. The legend of Princess Joruri in Yahagi says that the princess was so saddened by the parting that she ended up throwing herself into the Otogawa River, but the legend in Kambara is slightly different.

On her way to Oshu, Yoshitsune fell ill and died in Kambara. When Princess Joruri heard the news, she rushed to Kambara and wept over Yoshitsune's corpse. Her tears flowed into his mouth and brought him back to life. Then Yoshitsune left again for Oshu. The princess was so saddened by her separation from Yoshitsune that she could not return to Mikawa and died in Kambara. Out of sympathy and love for her death, the people of Kambara built a hill to commemorate her. Six pine trees were planted on the hill, which later became a guide for travelers.



## The Story of Momotaro



A beautiful 30 cm vase, adorned with four panels illustrating scenes from the tales of Tales of Genji (see the following part), the neck with a continuous stripe depicting the story of Momotaro. Momotarō is said to have been born from a peach and raised by childless foster parents. There are several versions of this story. In the best-known version, Momotaro comes to earth in a giant peach. An old woman without children sees the fruit and takes it home, they see the child at home if they want to open the fruit. The child says that heaven has sent him.

In the various stories at the age of fifteen, Omotarō goes to an island (Onigashima) and receives three flour balls from his mother. He gave it to a dog, a heasant and a monkey, who accompanied him. They defeated the oni on the island and took home the treasures and the stolen girls.



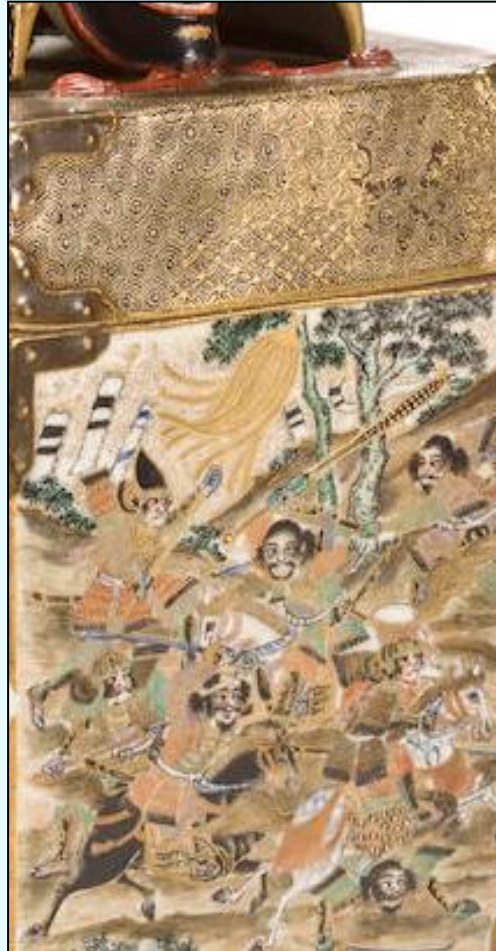
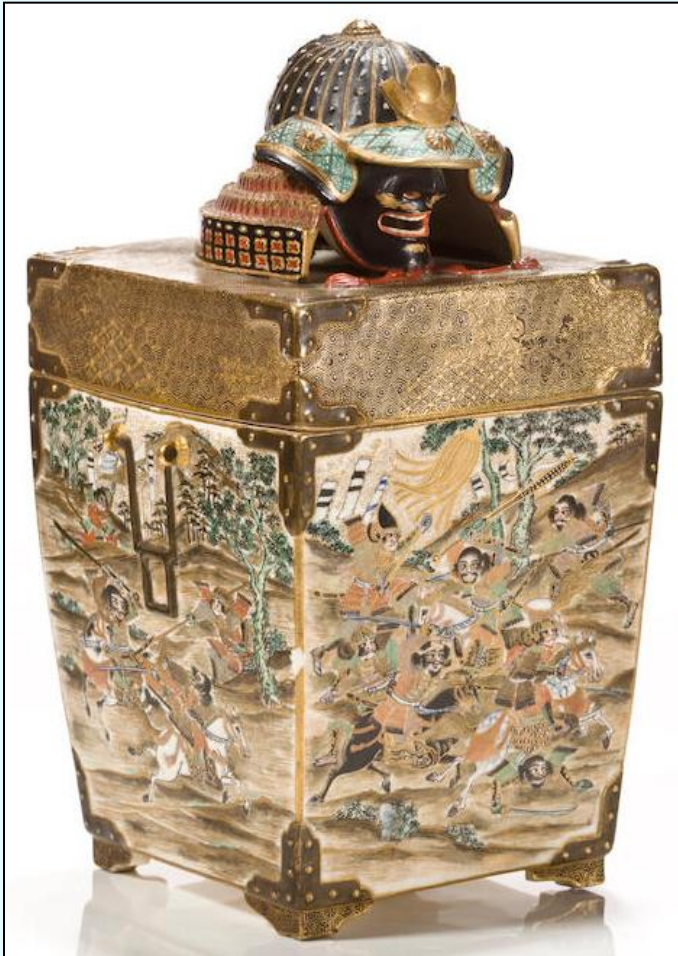
## The Tale of Hikaru Genji



The Tale of Genji (in Japanese Genji Monogatari) is a classic work of Japanese literature and was written by lady Murasaki Shikibu in the early 11th century. The tale is about the life of Hikaru Genji, the son of an ancient Japanese emperor and his concubine Kiritsubo Consort. The tale concentrates on Genji's romantic life and gives us a unique depiction of the lifestyles of high courtiers during the Heian period. For this reason scenes from "The Tale of Genji" are depicted frequently on Satsuma ware, although it is sometimes difficult to recognize. Probably this is also due to the way the tale was written. The work does not make use of a plot but merely describe events happening to hundreds of nameless characters who are only referred to by their function or role in the tale. But it gives a unique depiction of the customs of the aristocratic society during the Heian period, and therefore a rich source for many artists and decorators of Satsuma ware. Most of the times it is just a one-scene depiction what makes it difficult to say it is a scene from the tale. For instance, a Satsuma plate depicting a group of women in traditional dresses, playing music can be an allusion to chapter 35 (Wakana II) in the 'Tale of Genji', in which all the women in Genji's Rokujō mansion assembled to carry out a concert. But it can also be a group of women in traditional dresses, playing music and nothing more.

On the vase above, there is no doubt that the decoration refers to the Tale of Genji, as it illustrates in many scenes the life and lifestyle of high courtiers during Heian period, just as the written version does. This beautiful, 38 cm. tall vase was made by Jukan, at the end of the 19th century.

## The Heike Monogatari



The Heike Monogatari is a long epos compiled of stories and legends telling about the struggle for control of Japan between the Taira clan and Minamoto clan at the end of the 12th century in the Genpei War (1180–1185). For Japanese culture it is comparable with what the Iliad is for western culture. Its overall theme is the tragic downfall of the Taira family. Heike (平家) refers to the Taira (平), hei being an alternate reading of the first kanji.

The Heike monogatari features the exploits of Minamoto Yoshitsune, the main hero, and covers many episodes of the heroism of aristocratic samurai warriors. It opens with the tolling of a temple bell that, proclaiming the impermanence of all things, reveals the truth that the tyrannical Taira Kiyomori, whose powers seem unlimited—will be brought low like dust before the wind. The Taira suffer a series of defeats, culminating in a sea battle off Dannoura (1185) in which the seven-year-old emperor and many nobles are drowned. The work concludes with an account of the subsequent life of the empress mother, born a Taira. She dies in a remote convent to the tolling of a bell.

The story is depicted on this storage box with "metal" hardware and "hinged" carrying handles, the fitted lid designed with a helmet and face mask finia. It is, signed elaborately in gilt Dai Nihon Satsuma Dannoura Hododa sei Gassan and with red seal Gassan.

## The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove



The Seven Sages of the Bamboo Forests is originally a Chinese story, dating back to the third century. In Japan, the motif of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Forest (Chikurin shichiken) has been known and widely represented in Japanese art from the 16th century to the Meiji period, and was also depicted many times on Satsumaware. It is not always recognized as such, because groups of sages, rakans and immortals coming together is one of the most common depictions on Satsuma.

In a time of political turmoil, a small group of scholars chose to dedicate their lives to discussion, poetry and music, rather than putting this wisdom at the service of the government. It was typical of the Taoist qingtian ("pure conversation") movement that advocated freedom of individual expression and hedonistic escape from corrupt court politics. The group gathered in a bamboo forest near the estate of the writer and alchemist Ji Kang in Shanyang (in the south of the present province of Henan).

The independent thinking of these scholars was conceived as a contempt of the dignitaries at the court and their long cherished Confucian ideal of virtue deserved by the public service. This led to the execution of Ji Kang, after which the wise men were forced to flee in order to continue their own way of life. The 51 cm vase shown here depicts in gloomy enamel colours the moment that warriors approached the Seven Wise Men of the Bamboo Forest. On the vase we see more than seven people, which is not unusual because they are sometimes accompanied by Gods or by women and children.

The theme of individual expression through art, literature and music was also popular in Japan among members of the ruling samurai class who, like the Chinese Seven Wise Men of the Bamboo Forest, often gathered in their villas and tea houses to cultivate their personal interests in poetry, music, painting and the tea ceremony.

## The cowherd and the weaver



The gosekku (五節句) are the five seasonal festivals celebrated in Japan. They are traditionally Chinese festivals celebrated in Japan since the eighth century. In the early Edo period, however, they were formalised as official festivals by the Tokugawa shogunate, on days with odd numbers in both month and day, i.e. on January 1 - March 3 - May 5 - July 7 and September 9.

One such festival is the Tanabata, also known as Star Festival, celebrated every year on July 7 on the seventh day of the seventh month. It celebrates the meeting between the gods Orihime and Hikoboshi and is associated with fulfilling your dreams, perfecting your skills through hard work and celebrating love. Its origin is an ancient Chinese legend called "The Cowherd and the Weaver", which tells the story of Orihime, the daughter of Tentei (the Heavenly Kei). She is a skilled and hard-working weaver, sitting on the banks of the Amanogawa, or "River of Heaven" (天の川 is the Japanese name for Milky Way) weaving the most beautiful clothes. To reward her for her hard work, Tentei gives her permission to marry a cowherd called Hikoboshi (彦星 Star Boy). However, the couple is so much in love that they both start neglecting their daily chores. Tentei is furious and to punish them, he sends them each to a different side of the universe, on opposite sides of the Amanogawa. Orihime is distraught and sick with grief, and eventually Tentei allows the pair to see each other again, albeit only on one day of the year: on the seventh day of the seventh month and, of course, on the condition that they do not neglect the hard work and their daily tasks for the rest of the year. But: this happens only on a clear night, when the magpies can form a bridge over the Heavenly River with their wings. But unfortunately, when it rains, they cannot and the two lovers have to wait another year. Orihime and Hikoboshi plod through the year and can finally fulfil their big dream of seeing each other again. Only one day a year can the two lovers embrace, the rest of the year they dream of this day and work hard to make a new meeting a reality. Tanabata is not a public holiday, but is widely celebrated by hanging bamboo branches in front of gates and doors, decorated with colourful threads and long thin strips of paper with wishes written on them. The latter are often offered in poem form (tanzaku, poem strip), as was done many, many years ago. After Tanabata, the bamboo branches decorated with offerings are thrown into the water of a nearby river to fulfil all the wishes. Tanabata is not a public holiday, but is traditionally celebrated by throwing hanging bamboo branches in front of gates and doors, decorated with colourful threads and long thin strips of paper on which wishes are written. The latter are often offered in poem form (tanzaku, poem strip), as was done many, many years ago. After Tanabata, the bamboo branches decorated with offerings are thrown into the water of a nearby river to fulfil all the wishes.

On the plate is an image of the Tanabata Festival. Two women and two children hang tanzaku (poem-strip) decorations on bamboo stems. The plate was made by Kinkozan, and is part of a series of 12 plates depicting festivities throughout the year.

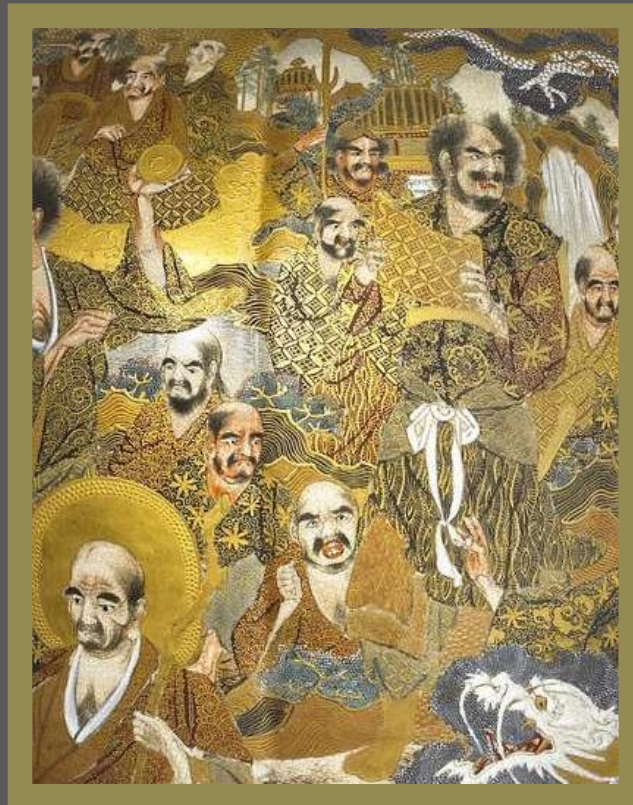
## 2. Gods, Demons and Mythical Creatures

Satsuma objects are sometimes lavished with the images of gods, deities and holy men, the so called immortals, sitting together in a smaller or larger group, sometimes on their own. They all can be traced back to the complex mixture of religions and beliefs that has merged in Japan, with influences coming from Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism and Shintoism.

Shinto is said to be the oldest religion in Japan, probably originated from the same time as Christianity. The term shintô can be translated as “the way of the gods”, and indeed there are many shinto gods, the Kami, which must not be seen as a ‘personnel gods’ as we know it in the west, but as spirits that can live anywhere. It is the spirit that is believed to be present in nature, in mountains and oceans, as well as in natural phenomena as storm and thunder.

In the 6th century, Buddhism was imported from Korea, with a different view on life and nature and with different Gods to worship. After a period of resistance eventually several of these Buddhas (butsu or nyorai in Japanese), and bodhisattvas (bosatsu) were adapted, interwoven with the shinto gods and placed in a religious concept what only can be found in Japan. This mixture of Shinto gods and Buddhist holymen gained deeply into Japanese cultural and spiritual life, what was also reflected in Japanese art. These Gods, deities and immortals were depicted frequently on blockwoodprints, netsukes and scrollpaintings and it's only normal that they they can also be found on satsuma wares.

This datafile tries to give a brief survey of the religious figures and mythical creatures what can be found on Satsuma-ware.



## Gods, Rakans and Immortals

### RAKAN and IMMORTALS

Among the many images that are found on Satsumaware those of gods, holy men and ancient scholars are the most frequently depicted. They are generally referred to as Gods, Immortals or Rakan, although there is a difference. On Satsumaware they often are grouped together.

*Immortals* are considered to be men who were of such greatness that they were unable to die, forced to live a life of study, worship and poverty. The Japanese term sennin 仙人 means mountain-man or hermit, but in Chinese (Xiānrén) it means "immortal person". They are no holy men, are depicted without a halo around the head. Often they are shown as scholars.

*Rakans* (Japanese name), Arhats (Sanskrit) or Lohans (Chinese name) are in Buddhist stories the examples of true believers who therefore has gained insight into the true nature of existence and rewarded with entrance to Nirvana. Traditionally, there are 16 Rakans, all have names and have various associated symbolic items. One can recognize them by the



Halo around the head, unless they are in the presence of Buddha himself in which case it should not be proper to depict them with a Halo.

The *Gods*, or Kami in Japanese, are spirits beyond human understanding; literally, “superior ones.” The word is usually translated as “gods” or “deities” in English, but has a much broader meaning because it includes also natural forces such as the sea and Mountains and one’s ancestors. They can either live in heaven as on earth. Though the kami are divine, they are not all equal in power. The number of Kami is countless, since these deities are connected with every natural phenomenon and every family in Japan.

They can be depicted as the personification of virtues like happiness, but also of a natural phenomenon, as “the god of the storm”





**KANNON**, god of Compassion and Mercy

One of the most depicted figures on Satsuma ware is a somewhat androgynous person, known as Kannon. Kannon has transformed in time from more masculin, although appearing with attributes of both genders to female and eventually became a symbol of the divine mother . Kannon is regarded as the god or goddess of Compassion and Mercy. In fact Kannon is not a Buddha, but a Bodhisattva, a being who is able to achieve Nirvana but prefers to stay on earth to help people in times of suffering.



Kannon (male/androgyn

version) sitting on a Shi-Shi or Foodog



Kannon (female version) on an Edo period vase.

## SHICHI FUKUJIN, The seven gods of Fortune

In Chinese Taoism, the Eight Immortals are eight individuals who gained eternal life. Stories about them were used to illustrate the ways a man or woman might achieve enlightenment. The eight influenced the creation of the Japanese Shichi Fukujin, or Seven Gods of Good Fortune who were chosen from Hinduist, Buddhist, Taoist and Shintoist religion, and probably grouped together around the 17th century. On Satsuma ware they are shown in small groups, or all seven together and frequently they are gathered around Kannon, sometimes sitting in a Treasure Boat or Takarabune. A large dragon is also frequently seen. They all represents a certain virtue as honesty, fortune or prosperity.

### **Ebisu** 恵比須

Ebisu is the God of Fishing, Shipping and Commerce. The virtue he represents is Honesty. He can be recognized by a fishing rod in his right hand and a large fish under his left arm.

His origin is Japanese.



Ebisu

### **Daikokuten** 大黒天

Daikokuten is the God of Wealth and Prosperity, and he represents the virtue of Fortune. He is depicted by a happy-looking smile on his face and is often presented with a bag with money his shoulder, carrying a magic mallet and standing on two bales of rice.

His origin is Indian Buddhism.



Daikokuten

**Bishamonten** 毘沙門天

Bishamonten is the God of Warriors and the Defence against Evil. The virtue he represents is Dignity . He is dressed in armor, holding in one hand a weapon, and in the other hand a pagoda or stupa, attributes what makes it easy to identify him.

His origin is Indian Buddhism.



Bihamonten

**Benzaiten / Benten**

弁財天

Benten is the Goddess of Arts and Knowledge. The virtue she represents is Joy. She is almost always presented as a beautiful dressed lady playing the biwa, sometimes the flute.

From origin she was a watergod in Hinduism,



Benzaiten

**Fukurokuju** 福祿寿

Fukurokuju is the God of Wealth, Happiness, and Longevity. The virtue he represents is Longevity. He is easy to recognize by his elongated forehead and often is holding a walking stick with a scroll tied to it.

His origin is Chinese Taoist-Buddhism.



Fukurokuju

**Hotei** 布袋

From Chinese beliefs, Hotei (a.k.a Budai) is the God of Happiness and Abundance. The virtue he represents is Happiness. Hotei is represented as a Buddhist monk holding a sack and a wooden staff. He can be recognized by his smiling face and a prominent belly.

His origin is Chinese Buddhism.



Hotei

**Jurōjin** 寿老人

Jurojin is the God of Wisdom and this is also the virtue he represents. He is presented as an old man of slight stature with a long white beard holding a knobbed walking staff with a scroll tied to it, sometimes a fan as well. In contrast with Fukurokuju, who is presented in a similar way, Jurojin has not such an elongated forehead and commonly wearing a hat. His origin is Chinese Taoism.



Jurojin standing in brocade patterned robes and holding an *uchiwa*, with impressed seal *Satsuma Gyokuzan*

## Some more Gods and Demons

### CHANG' E

Chang'e is the goddess of the moon



Chang'e as depicted on a set of miniature vases by Chin Jukan XII. She seems to float through the sky.

### AMATERASU

is the goddess of the sun and the universe. The name Amaterasu derived from Amateru meaning "shining in heaven." The Emperor of Japan is said to be a direct descendant of Amaterasu.



Saucer, signed Dai Nippon, Kyoto, Nishiki

### RAIJIN

is a god of lightning, thunder and storms in the Shinto religion and in Japanese mythology. His name is derived from the Japanese words rai (雷, meaning 'thunder') and shin (神, 'god' or 'kami'). He is typically depicted as a demon-looking spirit beating drums to create thunder, usually with the symbol tomoe drawn on the drums.

Tomoe is a Japanese symbol that is widely accepted as the symbol of Shinto. 'Tomoe' can roughly be translated as 'comma', with mitsu-tomoe meaning 'three commas'.



Raijin with the Tomoe-drums above a mother and child, walking in the storm as depicted on a beautiful vase, by Rizan..

### TENGU

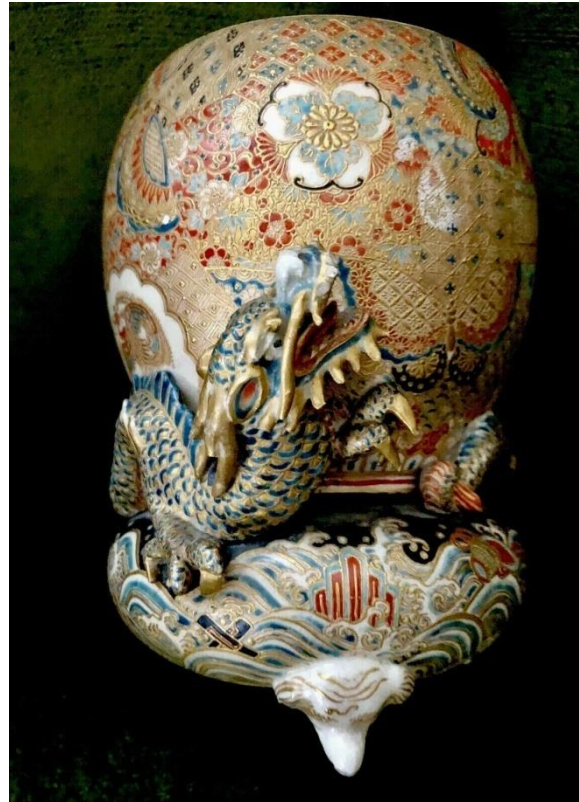
Tengu is a Japanese bird monster that often takes on human form. As humans they have big noses and wings to fly. Tengu were long considered enemies of Buddhism who corrupted followers and monks. However, in modern times they are viewed as protectors of sacred forests and mountains. They are considered to be a type of Shinto god (kami) or yōkai (supernatural beings).



Tengu attacking female deities, probably representing Buddhist virtues, on a wonderful Kinkozan masterpiece.

### RYUJIN

In Japanese mythology Ryūjin or Ryōjin (龍神) is the god of the sea. He looks like a dragon but can also turn into a human being. Ryūjin lived in Ryūgū-jō, his palace under the sea built out of red and white coral, from where he controlled the tides with magical jewels, the kanju (干珠). Seaturtles, fish and jellyfish are often depicted as Ryūjin's servants. Ryūjin is considered to be one of the ancestors of the Japanese imperial dynasty.



Ryujin on a vase

### KIRIN

The Kirin is the Japanese form of the "qilin", a Chinese mythological creature of great power. Over time, the Chinese and Japanese versions have changed into slightly different creatures. In Japanese mythology, the kirin is considered the most powerful and sacred beast of all, before the dragon and the phoenix. Despite its power, it is also a noble creature. When it walks, it does so without trampling a single blade of grass. Its beauty is surpassed only by its rarity; the unicorn kirin appears only in periods of world peace. They are only seen in countries owned by wise



The Kirin on an unmarked vase.

and benevolent people and during the reigns of noble and enlightened rulers, where they usher in a golden age. Although kirin never harm good and pure souls, they are quick and ferocious to attack when threatened, breathing sacred fire from their mouths. Japanese artists tends to portray the kirin as a deer with a horn on its head, with variants like dragon-like elements, or an oxtail instead of a lion's tail. Because of the horn on its head it is often compared to the western unicorn.



A procession in which Kannon, the goddess of mercy is riding a Kirin, as depicted on a wonderful Naruse Seishi plate (see *Satsuma on Display-2*).

#### SHACHIHOKO

Shachihoko is a creature with the head of a tiger and the body of a carp covered with poisonous spikes. They were believed to protect against fire and were carved in wood and often coated in gold when placed on the tops of castles. On Satsumaware they are rarely depicted.



Rar depiction of Shachihoko on a fine ceramic lidded tripod censer, standing 14cm tall, finely painted all over with two cartouches displaying a rare picture of a Shachihoko - on one side and Ho-o (phoenix) on the other. Early Meiji, using gosu blue.

#### HO-O

The Hō-ō is a mythical bird, comparable yet not to confuse with the Greek-Egyptian phoenix.



It origins from China and is worshiped in all east-Asia. Hōō are creatures with only positive annotations. Because of their purity, they only appear in lands that are blessed with peace, prosperity, and happiness . The appearance of a hō-ō is an omen to signify the beginning of a new era in history.

They are described as having the beak of a rooster, the jaw of a swallow, the head of a pheasant, the neck of a snake, the back of a tortoise, legs of a crane, and the tail of a peacock with five distinctive tail feathers. As a symbol in Japan, the Ho-o is most often used on items related to the Emperor. The Ho-o can be seen on all kind of art and is also on Satsumaware well represented.



The Ho-o as depicted on the same censer a s above.



A Ho-o on a 18 cm. bowl , late 19th. century with a decoration of Mount Fuji and a Ho-o above waves. Signed Tatsuraiken zo.

## ONI

An Oni can be translated as devil or demon, and their images can vary widely. In general they are depicted as horrible creatures with sharp claws, wild hair and horns on their heads.

Originally it was said that oni were lucky charms, who fended off evil. It was also said that they punished people who had done harm. Over time, oni became strongly associated with evil and were seen as the harbinger of disasters, creatures who only want to destroy.



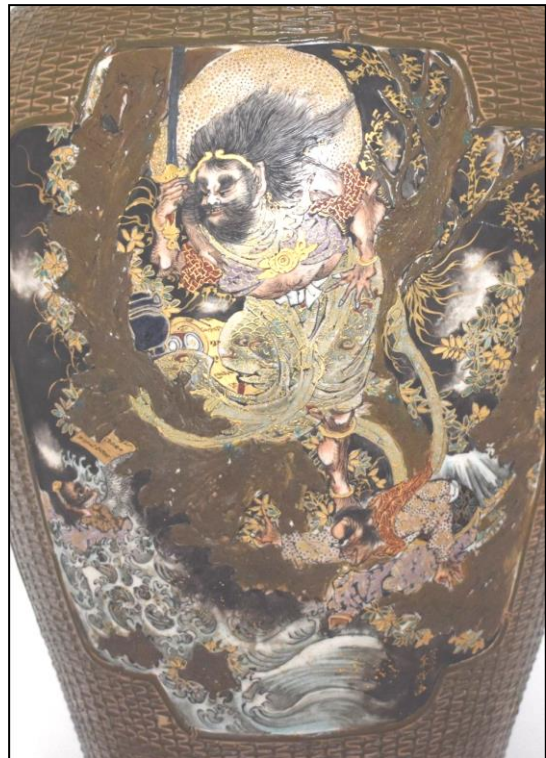
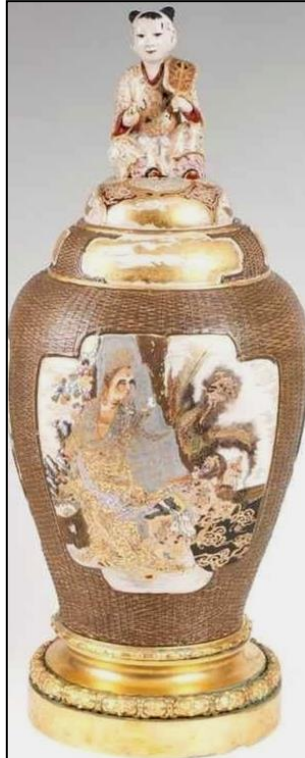
This impressive late 19th century charger painted by Kagetsu for Choshuzan workshop depicts a battle between the good (deities, the dragon) against the evil (the oni-creatures). Signed in gold on reverse: "Nagasaki, Dai-nippon Choshuzan Hosei-in saku, Kagetsu hitsu. The charger is 26cm.



Another image of oni's and Kannon, on a deep bowl by Kinkozan.

## SHOKI

Shōki 鍾馗 is a deity from China's Taoist pantheon. Legends about Shōki reportedly first appear in Tang-era (618-907) Chinese documents. The deity reached Japan by at least the late Heian Period (794 to 1185), for the oldest extant image of Shōki in Japan is a scroll at the Nara National Museum dated to the reign of Emperor Goshirakawa 後白河天皇 (1127-1192). Numerous legends surround Shōki in Japan and the West. The three most widespread are: Shōki's popularity peaked in Japan during the Edo period, when people began to hang images of Shōki outside their houses to ward off evil spirits during the Boys' Day festival (Tango no Sekku 端午の節句, May 5 each year, but now a festival for all children of both sexes) and to adorn the eaves and entrances of their homes with ceramic statues of the deity. Today, Shōki is a deity who was depicted often in Edo-period (1615-1868) Japanese sculptures and paintings, but one who is today largely neglected.



Beautiful huge 75 cm. vase, ormolu-mounted at base, decorated with three cartouche panels of immortal scenes. The cover topped with a sitting boy holding a fan, this panel is decorated with Shoki and Oni. Unidentified artist signed at the panel right.



A rare meijiperiod tripod Koro (attr. to Chin Jukan XII) showing Shoki with a sword sitting and holding Oni over top of the lid, and 2 Oni's sitting over the Koro as handles.

## GAMA SENNIN

This two-panel vase depicts the Daoist immortals, Gama Sennin and Tekkai Sennin. The two are often depicted together because of their corresponding powers. Depicted on the right is Gama Sennin, also known the 'toad hermit.' The legend goes back to the 10th century about civil servant and alchemist Liu Hai, the Chinese name for Gama Sennin. He can be identified easily by a large, three-legged toad by which he can be identified. With the aid of his magical toad Gama was able to release his spirit from his body, and fly.

## TEKKAI SENNIN

Tekkai Sennin is the Japanese name for one of the Chinese Eight Immortals, based on Taoism and other folk stories. Just as Gama he is capable to travel by releasing his spirit free from the body. One of his disciples was supposed to watch over his body, but burned the body instead. When Tekkai's spirit return, he found his body gone, leaving him no choice but to adopt the corpse of a dead beggar waht was laying beside the road. Tekkai is traditionally represented with a gourd that signifies his ability to transcend the body and to offer healing.



Gama Sennin (to be recognized by the toad on his head) and Tekkai Sennin, surrounded by children. Unmarked, late 19th century vase.

### JIZO

Jizo is a Bosatsu (Bodhisattva) a person who has attained enlightenment, but postpones Buddhahood (Nirvana) to help others to attain enlightenment and transcend the "wheel of life".

Jizo is the protector of children and travelers: he guides us on our travels and gives power to those who are weak (such as children) and to those in dangerous places.

Jizo is often depicted with a staff in one hand, the shakujō, which he shakes to awaken people from their delusions; in the other hand he holds a jewel, the hōju no tama, which bestows wishes upon all who suffer. Jizo does not get angry, nor does he ever give up.



Jizo

accompanied by children as depicted on a large tray by Narsu Seishi.

### HANDAKA SONJA

Handaka Sonja, is a rakan, one of the 16 special disciples of Buddha.

like all rakan, its origin is more Indian than Chinese. He can be recognized by his shaved head and a bowl that he carries with him, from which a dragon becomes visible in a cloud of smoke.



A bowl, 25cm, unsigned, depicting Handaka Sonja and the dragon.

## SHISHI / FOO-DOG

Shishi are guardian lions, or temple lions. In the west they are also called foo-dogs. In Japan however the lion figures are known as Shishi (獅子, lion) or Komainu (狛犬, lion dogs). Shishi (or Jishi) is translated as "lion" but it can also refer to a deer or dog with magical properties and the power to repel evil spirits. Shishi were believed to have these powerful mythic protective benefits, reason why traditionally they were placed in front of palaces, temples and houses of dignitaries. They are also used in other artistic contexts, for example on door-knockers, and in pottery. On satsumaware they are most seen as sculpted or moulded ornaments on Koro's, placed on top of the lid or used as handles or ears on vase.



### 3. Celebrations, Processions and Festivities

Troughout the year, there are festivals and celebrations in almost every region of the country. Since they are part of Japanese cultural life, and celebrated by the inhabitants of small villages as much as by the aristocrats and upperclass of Japan, it is therefore not surprising that these festivals, parades and other festivities are often depicted on Satsuma.



## Celebrations throughout the year

Kinkozan has made several sets of plates representing the 12 months of the year. These sets have different themes, with scenes related to the month that was shown. On the plates what is shown here ‘Celebrations’ is the main theme. Together they give the western collector a unique albeit idealized view of the time when they were made. Each plate was signed on the base with an impressed seal Kinkozan tsukuru and measures approx. 27cm. The complete set was sold in 2017 by Bonhams auctioneers and has been described in detail:

Each plate was decorated in enamels and gilt with a circular panel enclosing a figural or genre scene associated with one of the 12 months on a ground bordered by a band of dense millefleurs, each plate with two overlapping shikishi (square-shaped poem-cards) indicating the name of the month and its associated scene as below.



1) *Shogatsu: Manzai* (First month: manzai dancers), manzai dancers entertaining a mother and her daughter in front of their house in the New Year.



2) *Nigatsu: Umemi* (Second month: plum-blossom viewing), a samurai family and a *chajin* (tea master) or poet in a garden, flowering plum trees on the lakeshore.



3) *Sangatsu: Sakurami* (Third month: cherry-blossom-viewing), a lady and her servant strolling along the shores of a lake admiring flowering cherry blossoms as itinerant entertainers pass by



4) *Shigatsu: Kanbutsu* (Fourth month: the Buddha's birthday festival, held on the eighth day), a monk within a temple's precincts, women and children in the foreground, one child holding an *oke*(bucket) filled with sweet tea for baptizing Buddha's head;





5) *Gogatsu: Sekku* (Fifth month: Boys' Festival, held on the fifth day), a boy running with a banner to his mother and a servant talking to a courier delivering a *kabuto* (helmet), several banners in the background with designs associated with the festival;



6) *Rokugatsu: Sanno Matsuri* (Sixth month: Sanno Festival), two *ujiko* (pilgrims) standing by a tall banner inscribed *Kanda Daimyoin ujiko renchu* (a group of pilgrims from the Kanda Shrine), two *dashi* (festival floats) from the Sanno Festival, one of the largest festivals in Edo, in the background on the other side of the river;



7) *Shichigatsu: Tanabata* (Seventh month: Tanabata Festival held on the seventh day), two women and two children tying *tanzaku* (poem-slip) decorations to stalks of *sasa* (bamboo);



8) *Hachigatsu: Kangetsu* (Eighth month: the Mid-Autumn Festival on the 15th day), a family strolling on the shores of a lake during moon-viewing, rice cakes and a vase of autumnal plants on a stand behind them;



9) *Kugatsu: Kikuen* (Ninth month: chrysanthemum garden), a samurai family admiring a variety of fenced chrysanthemums, alluding to the *Choyo no sekku* (Chrysanthemum Festival), held on the ninth day;



10) *Jugatsu: Momijimi* (Tenth month: maple-viewing), women from a wealthy household and servants, one lady exclaiming surprise at a drunken gesticulating reveller;



11) *Juichigatsu: Tori-no-ichi* (Eleventh month: the Tori-no-ichi fair, held on a *tori* [rooster] day), people bringing their old *kumade* (bamboo rake) charms decorated with masks of Ofuku, Goddess of Mirth, and exchanging them for new ones symbolising the 'raking in' of wealth and good fortune;



12) *Junigatsu: Yukiasobi* (Twelfth month: snow play), figures on the snow-covered banks of a river, thatched buildings nestled beneath a spreading pine on the right, two ladies walking, one girl rolling a large snowball in the foreground and another girl carrying a snow rabbit on a tray in front of a snow model of Daruma

## Festivals, Dance and Music

### Awa-odori Dancefestival



Sake-pot depicting Awa-Odori. Awa Odori takes place during the Buddhist observance of O-bon, when the spirits of the dead are thought to return to their ancestral homes. In Tokushima the departed are welcomed back with a performance of the Dance of the Fools, which dates back more than 400 years. In 1587 a feudal overlord decided to throw a party to celebrate the completion of his new castle. His guests got so drunk that they began to dance, arms and legs flailing about all over the place. Once they had recovered from their hangovers it was decided to make it an annual event. The feudal government of the time, afraid that the gatherings could easily turn into a mob that would try and oust them from power, imposed restrictions on Awa Odori. Yet their legislation was unable to subdue the joyous spirit of the people, and the tradition lived on. It's now adays one of the biggest street festivals that Tokyo puts on during the summer. More than 10,000 dancers take to the streets of the western Tokyo neighborhood over the two-day event, and more than 1.2 million people come to watch them.



Dancingfeast on a bowl by Ryozan.

## Fan dance

The traditional Japanese fan dance is usually performed by a young woman, either singly or in a group of dancers. It involves using a hand-held fan as a prop. The dancers often wear brightly colored Japanese kimonos, and have elaborately arranged hair and bold make-up. Fan dancing involves slow, deliberate movements, figures and poses, which sometimes tell a story. This dance originated in Japan, in the 6th century. The Japanese Fan Dance was usually performed at court, for people of high social status. But later on as it became more popular, they started to perform it at ceremonies such as marriages, and other festivals. Also, the fans used represent your social status, because the craft men used to use pearls, sandal wood, and ivory to make these fans. And only the women of highest status is allowed to have these fancy fans. The Japanese fan dance is depicted regularly on Satsuma earthenware.



Geisha's entertaining with fan dance - Bowl, unidentified signature



Performance of a fan dance on a saucer by Kinkozan

## Shishi-mai / Lion Dance



Shinmura or Niimura signed vase, Meiji Period 35 cm, showing a scene of court performers in a traditional lion dance, used to repel evil spirits.

During the first days of the year in Japan, in the traditional areas or at Shinto shrines, you can witness one of the oldest Japanese traditions for the New Year, Shishi-mai, the Japanese lion dance is performed. Originally from China, the old legend of the lion dance says:

Once a monk had a bad dream, seeing a future with diseases and disasters. He then prayed to the gods to teach him how to prevent the misfortunes and the gods told him that a lion will provide protection and will fight against the evil spirits. Then the monk started working to create the image of a lion, but because he didn't know how a real lion looks like, he combined the most powerful magical animals he knew...

That's how shishi, the Chinese lion appeared and soon the shishi image spread through all the countries around China, including Japan. In Japan, the lion dance suffered many changes over the years, the music and the dance varying from a region to another. However, the lion's representation is similar to the Chinese one: a wooden head (shishi-gashira) with a body made from a green cloak with white drawings. The shishi can be handled by one or two performers.

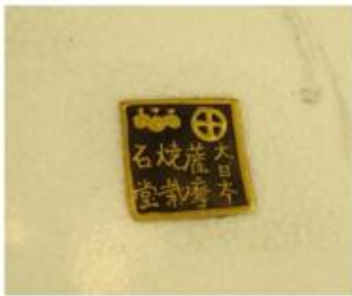
**Hanami- Cherry Blossom festival**

Bowl with gilt signature Chikuzan below shimazu mon, 24.5cm diameter. It has a family picnic scene during Cherry blossom festival, also known as the Hanami or Sakurami festival. Hanami literally means 'flower viewing' and is one of Japan's most ancient festivals, celebrated by picnicking in the vicinity of cherry blossoms. Hanami has its origins in the eighth century, and originally focused on plum blossoms, which bloom slightly earlier. The focus switched to cherry blossoms during the ninth century reign of Emperor Saga, who held flower-viewing parties under the cherry blossom trees of the imperial court in Kyoto. At these early celebrations, aristocrats wrote and recited poems about the blossoms, and took pleasure in their beauty. Hanami gradually spread from the court elite to the samurai, and eventually to the common people. Nowadays almost everyone in Japan eagerly looks forward to the coming of the cherry blossoms.



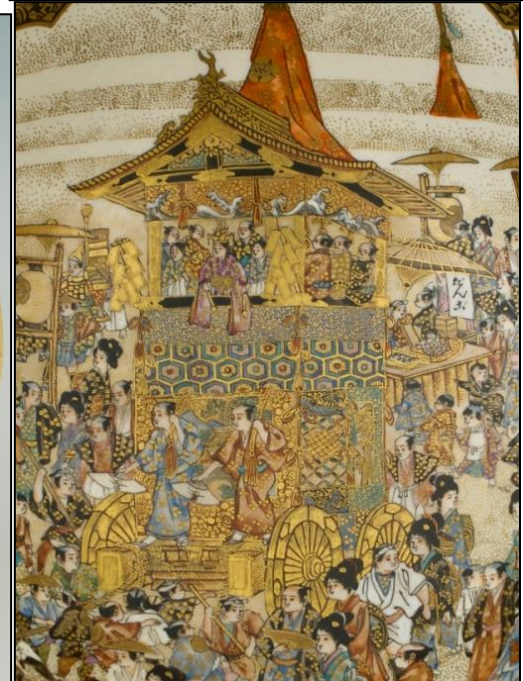
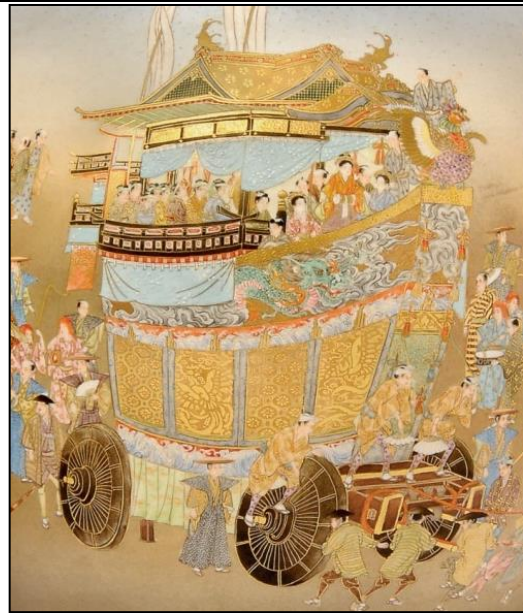
large (14.5") Meiji period satsuma vase with the mark of Shuzan. It has scenes depicting the Hanami festival.

**Niiname Sai** or “Celebrations of the First Taste” is to celebrate the rice harvest in autumn when the rice is collected and the first sake of the year is made. While some of those festivals are large scale and attract thousands of people, others are quite small and very local.



by Shiseki

**The Gion festival**, or Gion Matsuri is the festival of Yasaka Shrine in Kyoto and is the most famous festival in Japan. It takes place over the entire month of July. One of the main reasons what makes the Gion Matsuri so impressive is the enormity of the hoko, which are up to 25 meters tall, weigh up to 12 tons, and are pulled on wheels as big as people.



Two Kinkozan pieces, depicting Gion Matsuri. A 23 cm vase decorated intricately in various coloured enamels and gilt on a variegated gold and pale blue ground with scenes from the Gion Festival, the neck with a scrolling pattern and flowers in gilt. Its's signed Kinkozan zo and impressed seal Kinkozan zo, Meiji Period (late 19th century) A bowl, H. 6.5 cm x diam. 12,5 cm

**Gion festival with white elephant.**





A rare bowl depicting the same theme as above, the Gion festival but the Hoko replaced by a white elephant. The faces are painted in very natural coloured. The piece is unsigned but the white elephant is a known subject matter by Yabu Meizan. The high quality in every detail is also characteristic for pieces made by Yabu Meizan.



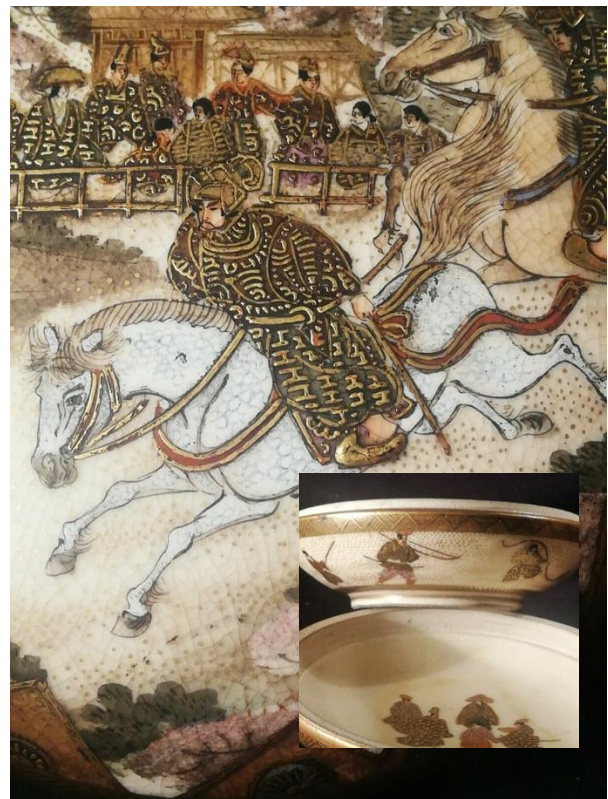
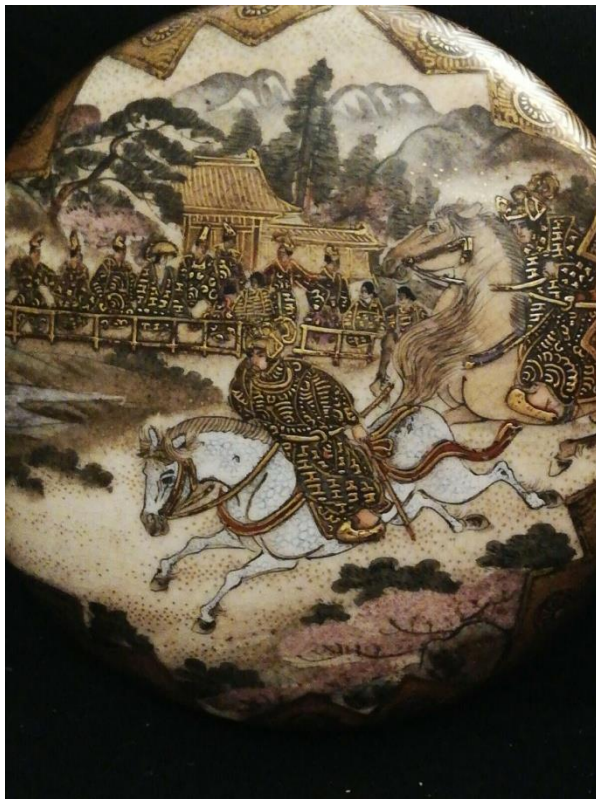
Same theme as above, the Gion festival with a white elephant by Baizan.

**The Dragonboat race festival**, also known as Haarii are festivals held to pray for a safe voyage and a good catch and to thank the sea for its blessings. The origin of boat races in Japan is probably in China, but is now celebrated in east Asia as well. Japan is surrounded by the sea and boats played an important role in people's lives. Boat owners and boat builders tried boat races to check the performances of their boats and show-off their boat building skills. This is how traditional boat racing developed and continued up until now. Nowadays approximately 260 boat races are being performed throughout Japan and with many types of boats from tubs (Tarai Matsuri) to rafts (Ikada Matsuri) and imperial dragonboats.



A saucer and two bowls, all depicting spectators watching a dragonboat festival. The plate left is crowded with women dressed in costumes from Heian period. The bowl at the right, is crowded with men in what looks like Chinese robes. Most likely the artist tried to illustrate a scene from the original Chinese dragonboat festival, which was performed on rivers and creeks to pray to their God of Agriculture. The last bowl was made by Ryuun Fuzan.

**The Soma Nomaoi festival** is held every year in July for three days in the city of Minasoma, Fukushima Prefecture, and is one of the most famous traditional festivals in Japan. It dates back to the Sengoku period and has a history of over 1,000 years. The tradition of the festival started as part of a military exercise by the founder of the Soma Clan, Taira no Kojiro Masakado. It is said that instead of enemies, he released wild horses onto a plain and had his cavalry chase and capture them. After the exercise, the captured horses were dedicated as offerings to the Shinto god known as Myoken Bodhisattva. The main highlight of the festival is on the second day at noon and is called Kacchu Keiba, a horse race held by 10 riders in full samurai armour on a 1000-metre loop track. On this small Kogo we see a picture of this traditional race, with spectators watching the two samurai riders in their race. The quality of the kogo is not exceptional but the depiction is special because the Soma-Nomai was rarely depicted on Satsuma. The kogo is signed, but the mark is faded and therefore its maker cannot be identified.



**Travelling musicians**

Musicgroup and soshidancer



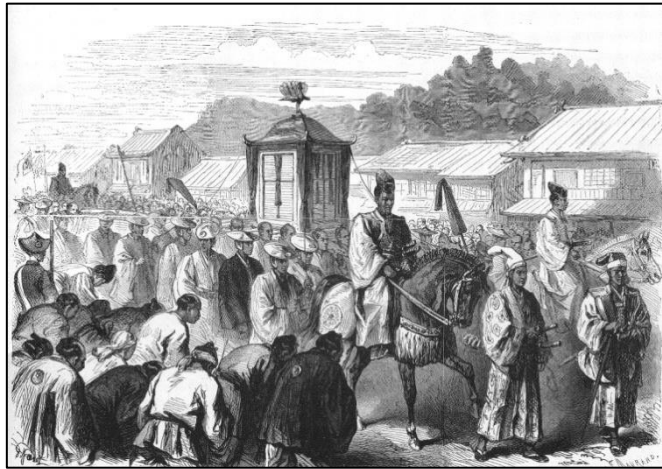
A 16 cm. vase by Hattori



On two panels: the arrival of a musicgroup in the village, surrounded by children. and the performance of the group. Unmarked vase, Meiji period.

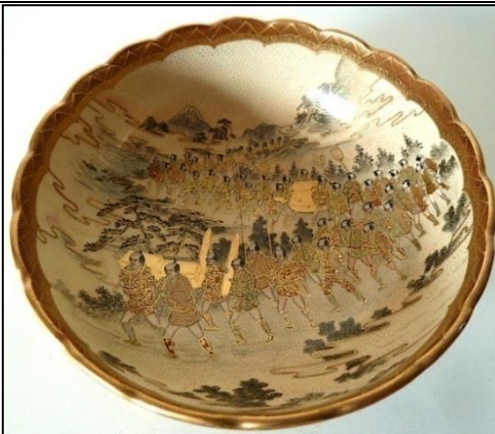
## Sankin-kōtai or Daimyo procession

The historical background of the Daimyo procession is the Sankin-kōtai or "alternate attendance" what was a policy of the Tokugawa shogunate during the Edo eperiod. It was a military service due to the Shogun in Edo, which required daimyō, to alternate living for a year in their domain and in Edo. Each daimyō was required to bring a number of samurai with him. These soldiers accompanied the daimyō on the processions to and from Edo. With hundreds of daimyōs entering or leaving Edo each year, these processions were almost daily

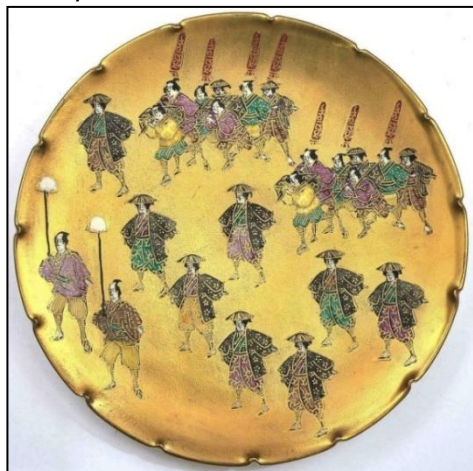


occurrences in the shogunal capital. It stopped in 1862, at the beginning of the Meiji period, and was allready history at the time these processions occurs on Satsumaware.

Images of long rows of Samurai are frequently depicted on Satsuma ware. Sometimes they are giving a historical view, sometimes they are more ceremonial, shown in modern festivals to memorize these processions. And sometime they are even shown in a way it was never seen: by children or geisha's. These Daimyo processions arde depited on all kind of Satsuma ware: koro's, vases, bowls,dishes and buttons.



Bowl by Kitamura



A plate, signed Koshida



A daimyo procession on a 3 cm button



A rare image of a geisha procession, leaving the Edocastle, as a parody on the Daimyo-processions.



A Daimyoprocession appraching the city walls, as depicted on a 18cm plate by Hozan.



Daimyoprocession on a 30cm. double vase, signed Unzan.



A Kinkozan vase

# Theater

## Theatre

Japanese theatre includes traditional forms that date back as far as the 14th century. The major types of Japanese theatre are Noh, Kyogen, Kabuki and Bunraku. On Satsuma ware it are most scenes or Masks from Noh and Kabuki, what is depicted.

### Noh

Noh and Kyogen theatre traditions are among the oldest continuous theatre traditions in the world.. Noh was a spiritual drama, combining symbolism from Buddhism and Shintoism and focusing on tales with mythic significance. Noh theatre was generally performed for the elite aristocratic class, but there were occasions where Noh was also performed for common audiences.

Kabuki combines music, drama, and dance. It uses wild costumes and intense choreography and all roles are traditionally played by male actors. It historically evolved in pleasure districts and plays ran all night surrounded by food and drink.

Kyogen, it's comic partner, served as a link between the theological themes of the Noh play with the pedestrian world by use of theatrical farce and slapstick.

Bunraku Puppets used in Japanese theatre as early as the Noh plays. The puppets were 3- to 4-foot-tall (0.91 to 1.52 m) and the dolls were manipulated by puppeteers in full view of the audience. The puppeteers controlling the legs and hands of the puppets are dressed entirely in black, while the head puppeteer in contrast wears a colorful costume



Scenes from the Nebuko theater, on Edo period chargers, 25 cm and 30cm.



Noh-masks depicted on Satsuma buttons, about 2,2 cm



Earthenware Noh Dancer by Miyanaga Tozan, Meiji Period (1868-1912). Signed on the bottom. H. 23 cm. Miyanaga Tozan I (1868-1941) is one of the most important names in Kyoto ceramics.



## 4. Ideal Childhood

Children can be seen on vases, bowls, koro's and teaware of every form and size, playing, dancing and making music. Since children are depicted so often on Satsuma objects, these images also can give you an idea about how during the Meiji-period children were seen by adults.

According to Edward S. Morse, who worked and travelled intensively in Japan in the early Meiji years, Japan was a true paradise for children. Read for instance page 41 of his book "Japan Day by Day, 1877, 1878-79-1882-83." - Boston 1917. (For free download, see the Welcome page)

There is one subject, among many subjects, that foreign writers are unanimously agreed upon, and that is that Japan is the paradise for children. Not only are they kindly treated, but they have more liberty, take less liberty with their liberties, and have a greater variety of delightful experiences than the children of any other people. As infants forever riding on their mother's back or somebody's else back; no punishment, no chiding, no scolding, no nagging; such favors and privileges are they allowed that one would certainly think that they would be spoiled, and yet no nation possesses children that can approach the Japanese children in love of parents and respect for the aged.

To get an impression on this subject, this section tries to give a few themes, illustrated by examples as found on Satsuma ware.

Ideal childhood  
Games children play  
Imitation of adults  
Parties and events  
Children and religion  
The perfect mother



## Ideal childhood

Children are one of the favorite subjects on Satsuma ware. They are almost always dressed and hair cut in a traditional way, the heads are as *karako*'s shaved completely except on the front and side of the head. It is sometimes said that the level of civilization of a society can be seen in the way in which children are treated. If this is true, Japan in the Meiji period should be considered as a very civilized country, a children's paradise far superior to Charles Dickens' England, for example. It is obvious that in such a wonderful world for children, they are depicted with a joy and innocence what seems beyond reality. In this ideal world there is only place for celebrating childhood in all possible ways.



The lobbed bowl here shown, signed Nishida, depicts the joy of childhood in optima forma. Children are dancing and making music, surrounded by butterflies and flowers, all smiling and looking utterly happy. In spite of all the elements what is on it, Nishida succeeded to maintain a perfect balance, what makes it a true work of art.



A plate with the same theme of children playing music, also by Nishida.



Boys day on a Kutani-Satsuma style plate



Not only the theme, but also the design of playfull children surrounded by flowers, birds or butterflies was used by more decorators of earthenware as shown on this plate. This plate was unmarked, the design has not the same balancy as on the plate by Nishida.



Kinkozan , Meiji period.



This Kinkozan vase of 40 cm. is completely different of style as the items above, but nevertheless has the same theme of happy children.

Kinkozan experimented extensively with monochrome earthenware in the period 1890-1890, of which this is an example. The sleek but stylish design and the satin glossy of the brown, almost black color are in contrast, yet form a whole with the playful and cheerful way in which the children are applied. Nice example of the way in which Kinkozan managed to combine innovation and tradition in his designs.

## Games children play

Children play, and that is of all times and cultures. The games they play may differ per region, but they also have a lot in common. It is interesting to know that by playing, children train themselves in the kind of behavior what is expected from them when they became adults. So for children it may seem that playing is just having fun, but how and what they play can also be considered to be an initiation into the values and norms of the society in which they grow up. Because gender is the most important distinction, there is always a difference between the game of boys and girls. Girls play more often games of skill or focussed on caregiving, boys are more focussed on competition and struggle. What they play is what society expect them to become. Children play their games all over the world. Some of them are unknown in other countries, but others are widespread and occur worldwijd. The games here depicted are traditional Chinese or Japanese but are in slightly different form known in the west as well.

### Ohajiki



A button with gold border and a scene with two girls playing Ohajiki. The button measures only 3cm. Ohajiki is a traditional Japanese children's game, similar to marbles. The game became popular as an indoor game for girls during the Edo period, and is played with small, flat pieces also called ohajiki. It is nowadays made of glass or plastic, but in the past it was often played with pebbles or go stones.

### Kungzhu



A powder box depicting three boys playing Kungzhu. The boys are beautifully dressed and surrounded by tiny gilt morriage beads of gold. It measures 14cm diameter, unmarked. Kongzhu is a skill game, originating from China (yo-yo) and as diabolo also known in the west. By using a string that is attached to two hand sticks, a certain object is rotated along the cord. The fun is to do all possible tricks by using the sticks, string and different parts of the body differently.

### Hina matsuri / Girls day



Girls day celebration, on a 18cm bowl by Nakamura Baikei. A special day held on 3th of march, celebrating both girls and dolls. Depicted are children, their parent, obviously dignitaries and a display with dolls.

### Tango no Sekku / Boys' Day



The boys' day festival or Tango no Sekku was held May 5th each year, but is now a festival for all of both sexes. Different from Hinamatsuri when dolls called "Hinaningyo" are decorated at home, on this day the families with boys will raise carp-shaped flags called "Koinobori" to express hope that their boys will grow up healthy and strong. The carp is thought to be a symbol of strength, courage and success because of a Chinese legend that a carp swam upstream and became a dragon. It is depicted here on a Kinkozan porcelain vase of 27cm.

## New year Celebration



A Beautiful 36 cm vase, signed by Koyosha, depicting children playing all kind of games: girls playing Henetsuki, boys kiting, girls selling flowers, selling limonade and playing shop. Probably new years day when children do all kind of games.

## Henetsuki



Girls playing Henetsuki, on a beautiful 36 cm vase. Signed by Koyosha.

Hanetsuki is a Japanese traditional game, similar to badminton but played without a net and with a rectangular sometiis beautifully decorated wooden paddle (a hagoita) and a brightly coloured shuttlecock. It is often played played by girls at the New Year, because it is said that the longer the shuttlecock remains in the air, the less the players will be stung by mosquitoes during the coming year.



Girls playing shop, selling pottery



Boys making a snowman in winter,

unmarked vase

## Children imitating adults

It is striking to see how often children are depicted, imitating an activity from the world of adults. This can be seen on saucers, where often a well-known motif such as "the Daimyo procession" is performed by children. On an object with more dimensions, like a vase or a koro, it's often seen that a certain activity of adults is repeated by children on the reversed side.



On two opposite panels of an unmarked , 19th century, 30 cm vase: noble men paying respect to the Daymio and a the same depiction of children.



On two opposite panels of an unmarked , Meiji-period Kyoto, 20 cm vase: a gathering of Samoerai warriors at one side, and children playing Samoerai.





Children dressed as samurai and noble men, imitating a Daimyo procession, signed Seikoizan on a koro, 9,5 cm h.



A Yabu Meizan motif, a procession with white elephant here depicted with children

## Children and religion

Religion in Japan is a wonderful mix of ideas from Shintoism and Buddhism. Shintoism is Japan's indigenous spirituality. It is believed that every living thing in nature (e.g. trees, rocks, flowers, animals - even sounds) contains kami, or gods. Unlike in the West, religion in Japan is rarely preached, nor is it a doctrine. Instead it is a moral code, a way of living, almost indistinguishable from Japanese social and cultural values. In essence, Shintoism is the spirituality of this world and this life, whereas Buddhism is concerned with the soul and the afterlife. This explains why for the Japanese the two religions exist so successfully together, without contradiction. To celebrate a birth or marriage, or to pray for a good harvest, the Japanese turn to Shintoism. Funerals, on the other hand, are usually Buddhist ceremonies. Although the majority of Japanese do not worship regularly or claim to be religious, most people take part in spiritual matsuri (or festivals) throughout the year and celebrate birth, marriage and death in a religious way. Religion therefor, is not a matter of deep religious belief but of cultural heritage, what become part of daily life. Children were surrounded by religious festivities as cherry blossom watching, and went to one of the 100000 shrines all over the country, dedicated to countless gods and kamis from Shinto as well as Buddhism. When they are depicted on Satsuma pottery, there does not seem to be a hidden message in it, religion in Japan is rarely preached, nor is it a doctrine. Instead it is a moral code, a way of living, almost indistinguishable from Japanese social and cultural values. So, children depicted this way are just part of a religious and spiritual world, and their occurrence among of the gods and holymen is only natural



A 19th century Japanese Satsuma bowl with four rakan surrounded by children. Diam. 13cm. One child has a whip in her hand while she is riding on a foo dog.



Children with Ebisu (god of fishing, shipping and commerce) and Daikokuten (God of Wealth and Prosperity) on a unmarked, 20 cm. charger of unusual form. Meiji period.



Gama Sennin (to be recognized by the toad on his head) and Tekkai Sennin, surrounded by children. Unmarked, late 19th century vase.



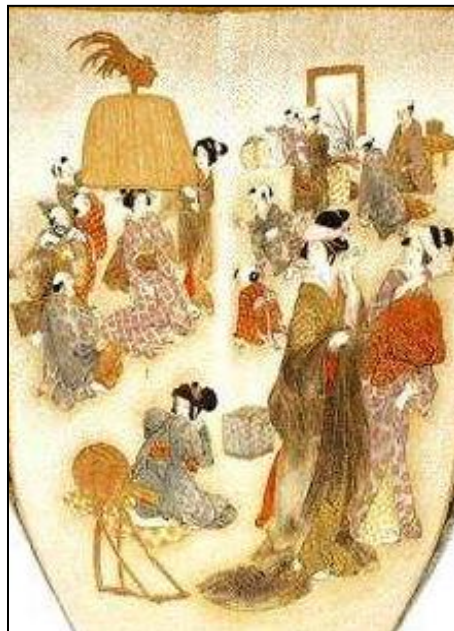
Children as ornaments on top and with white elephant on a vase with mythological creatures and rakan.

## The perfect mother

Women and children are depicted many times on Satsuma pottery. It is tempting to label these women as the mother of these children, but the question is whether that is really the case. The persons depicted on Satsuma almost always come from the higher classes of Japanese society: notables, dignitaries, samurai and their spouses. Up to the Meiji period in these circles it was not obvious that mothers were the most important caretakers of their children. That task was assigned to the governors and it is therefore more than likely that many of the women depicted on Satsuma pottery represent governesses and the children entrusted to their care.

That image changed from the beginning of the Meiji period. Under the influence of nationalism and the idea of great -Japan, a new impetus arose in which the women acted as the guardian of the Japanese future, with the important task of properly caring for and raising children to be the good citizens Japan needed. And that can also be seen on Satsuma pottery. Representations of women and children from the Meiji period certainly have an ideological character to represent the ideal mother.

Because the pictures on Satsuma earthenware often refer to earlier times, the heyday of the samurai, it is likely that in that case it might be governesses and children. Nevertheless, the maker of it will also have portrayed the ideal mother here, even though historically that is not correct.



Meiji (1868-1912) Japanese Cobalt Blue Diamond Shaped Satsuma Geisha Signed Hozan. Size: 25.5 cm tall by 18 cm width.



Richly decorated plate with women & children playing in a garden. delicate colours. Marked Ichizan with Shimazu family crest. Diameter 18,4 cm



Satsuma plate signed Dozan ,diam. 24,5 cm depicting the charming scene of a mother with her child out in the fields feeding goats, they stand beneath a finely detailed Prunus blossom tree beside a stream with birds in flight above.



Satsuma dish with a creased rim, decorated with children at play with their mothers nearby. 16cm, Signed Seikozan, circa 1890'

## 5. Samurai-world

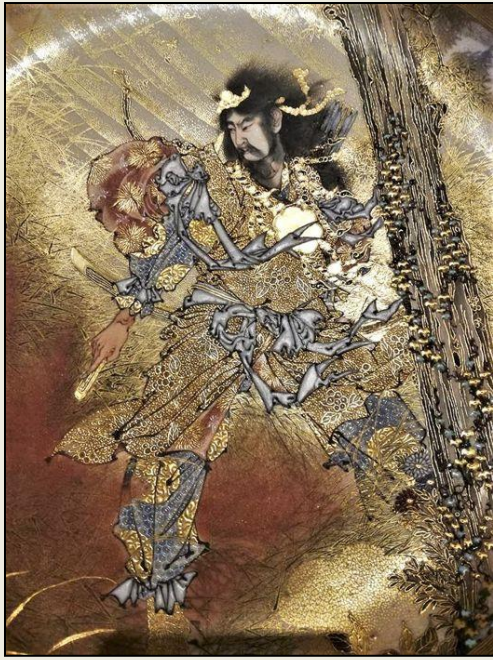
Samurai's are among the subjects that are most depicted on Satsuma pottery. Often this is in a way that fits the image that exists: warlike and always willing to fight. Samurai achieved mythical status because of their fearlessness, courage, loyalty and a sense of honor that was considered more important than life itself. The Samurai lived according to a strict code of honor from Bushido or "the way of the warrior", derived from Shinto or "the way of gods". It was a strict code concerning loyalty, dedication and honor, and a Samurai who did not act according to this code could be sentenced to "seppuku" or ritual suicide. From the history of Japan we can see that the country was divided for centuries by civil wars. It is from this period that most of the stories stem from the incredible courage and self-sacrifice of this Samurai. Originally "peasant warriors" acquired so much power and prestige that they eventually became the highest ranking in Japanese society, with numerous far-reaching privileges. Only Samurai's were allowed to wear a sword and even allowed to kill an "ordinary citizen" if he showed insufficient respect for them.

That all changed during the shogunate of the Tokugawa family, which ruled over Japan from 1600 until the Meiji period. During this period there were hardly any wars and with the arrival of the Portuguese around 1550 new weapons were also introduced: hook buses and cannons. The traditional weapons such as katana, naginata, and bow and arrow offered little resistance to this. Moreover, it did not require years of training to use them, and because they could be used from a relatively long distance, there was not much one-to-one fighting anymore.

The Samurai as a high class in society continued to exist but many traditional samurai left the ranks, or received other functions as administrators, artists or teachers since they were all literated and educated men. The katana was only used for certain ceremonies and eventually even banned. After a final burst known as the Satsuma Uprising in 1871, the entire Samurai class was abolished to make way for a "Western" inspired army.

Samurai warriors can be found countless times on Satsuma pottery. Sometimes they are the main role players in a historical story, but most of the time they only act as a decorative element that appealed to the fascination of the West for ancient Japan. Often they are clearly recognizable as Samurai because of their equipment, but often they are not recognizable as such because they are portrayed as members of the good and higher class, walking in the park, or as a spectator of a procession. The latter is more in line with the truth: In the late Edo period, the samurai were no longer the heroic warriors they once were. And in Meiji period, when they appeared on Satsuma earthenware, they no longer existed at all.

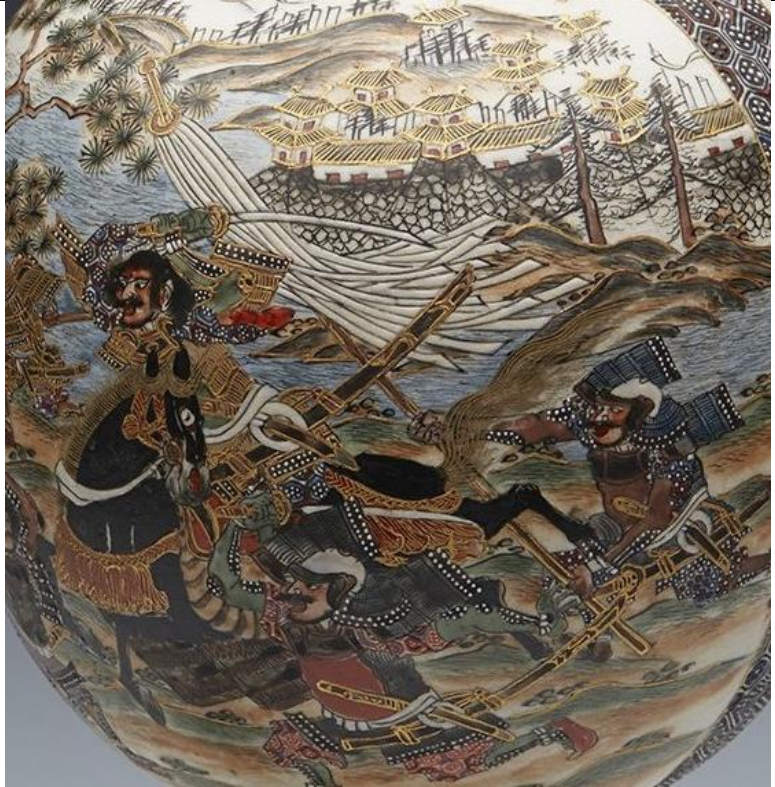




This 30 cm. late 19th-century Satsuma platter depicts a Samurai, burning reed, a warrior's technique of the Samurai. It is technically of very high quality, the painting is meticulous and clearly by the hand of a great master.. Possibly an early production of the Kinkozan studio: the artwork is unmarked, as was customary for certain earlier works by this studio. The earthenware paste has the characteristics of the late 19th-century Satsuma pieces.



A samurai in full regalia as depicted on a wonderful 45 cm. charger, telling the story of princess Kaguya, also known as the moon princess. (See the first part of this datafile)



Koro and cover lavishly painted with a battle scene, most likely made by Kinkoku and Sane Yoshi and certainly very similar in style dating from the Meiji period and around 1890. The opposite side with a meeting of elders, possibly debating the battle and negotiating peace.



A bowl of 22 cm across, decorated with scenes of warriors in battle and dragon decoration around.





A box and cover, of square form on four bracket feet, painted with samurai in combat in shaped panels against a diapered ground, the cover with a tatami kabuto knob, signed Dai Nihon Satsuma Shunobu, 12cm high



It's likely the design of these kind of Satsuma was inspired (if not copied) after a blockwood print, for instance this "The Great Battle at Yamazaki" by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi or one of the many other prints depicting a famous battlescene.





Samurai's paying respect to their Lord, as depicted on a 29 cm plate , signed Hattori.



A large rectangular charger with a fine quality hand-painting, signed by Toyama. The charger depicts samurai in full armor and a procession of samurai on the left side. H. 30cm. Meiji period

## 6. Enchanting Nature

There has always been a special, almost spiritual bond between the Japanese people and the nature around them. Culture and nature seem to be in perfect harmony with each other, which becomes apparent in numerous actions. The flower arrangement, ikebana, is elevated to art, as is the cultivation of bonsai trees, a tradition that is more than a thousand years old. Gardens are laid and maintained with endless patience and craftsmanship. Patience, knowledge and attention for what you do are the key words, an attitude to life that comes from the Shinto religion that strives for a harmonious life with nature.

Their love for nature can also be found on Satsuma pottery. Landscapes, flowers, birds and other animals are favorite subjects and are displayed countless times.

However, the way in which this happened has changed considerably in time. The early decoration was simple with all due respect to the beautiful pottery itself. This changed dramatically during the Meiji years. The decoration sometimes completely covered the beautiful ivory tones of the pottery itself. The artists simply painted what was considered attractive in the west as beautiful. And it is still a feast for the eyes, to see the delicate details on good Satsuma yaki and the refinement and attention to every detail is breathtaking. In Japan itself, however, there were few good words for it. Their appreciation for the simplicity of nature was too far removed from these lavishly decorated export products.

In this section we present examples of the best Satsuma ware, depicting the Japanese nature. Kinkozan is a name that pops up many times, as indeed Kinkozan had some of the best artists and decorators working for his workshop.



## Dreamy Landscapes



A Kyo-Satsuma dish with underglaze painting in blue, and polychrome overglaze enamels, including gold depicting a landscape using westernized perspective, diam. 36,7 cm. Painted and signed by Itsuzan for Kinkozan. Ca. 1900.



A vase by Kinkozan, Meiji period late 19th Century. H. 44 cm. Decorated in various coloured enamels and gilt, the first panel depicts a landscape with flying cranes, and has a wonderful, somewhat dreamy, fairy look. The other panel depicting ladies and children amongst trees and flowers, bordered by cherry blossoms and maple leaves.



A nother dreamy view on Japans nature, Kinkozan.



This Meiji period Satsuma ware Japanese antique vase is painted by the artist Suwa Sozan (1852-1922) for the Kinkozan workshop of Kyoto. Sozan was one of the prolific artists working for the Kinkozan workshop.

## Animals and flowers



Ducks in a marsh landscape, Japan, late 19th c.; Kinkozan; 8 1/2" x 6" dia



Signed Sozan ( for Kinkozan) vase with irises in the style of Ogata Korin, late 19th c. 24 cm.



A Kinkozan plate depicting a long rectangular reserve with a small bird sitting below a blossoming tree and watching a spray of water flowing out of a fountain. The other reserve with a butterfly above a dense bush of flowers. Meiji period, ca. 1900. Diam 22,5 cm.



An unmarked vase with rooster, chickens and birds. Ca. 1900, H. 40 cm.



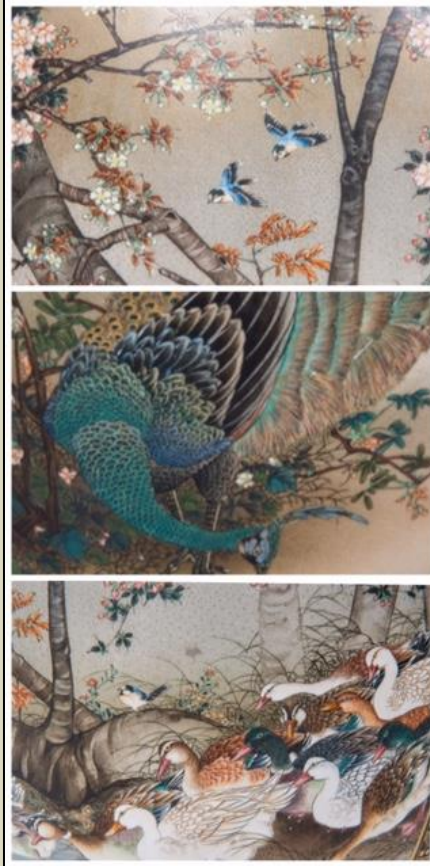
A variation on the millefleur decoration by Kinkozan. An avoid shaped vase decorated on the upper part with a profusion of flowers and foliage in bright colours with gilt detailing, below a gilt brocade and key-fret border around the short waisted neck, the base impressed and signed Kinkozan. H. 22 cm high



Makuzu Kozan workshop, vase with fishes.



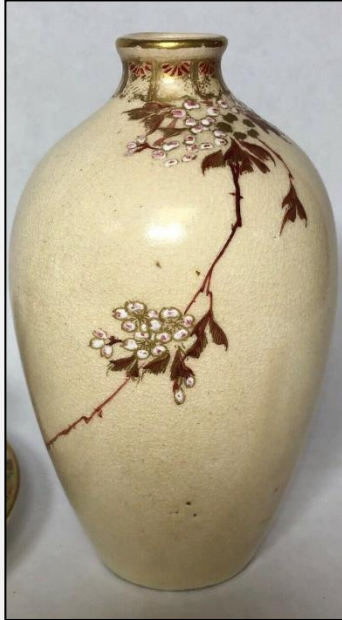
A wonderful vase with scenes of peacocks and ducks under blossom trees, the blue ground with gilded decoration. Signed; Kinkozan. H. 44cm. Meiji period, ca. 1900.



A pair of Moonvases, signed Satsuma, Koshida, H. 18.5 cm. Taisho period

## Simple nature

The following examples contrast with the lavishly decorated Kyoto pieces from the Meiji and later periods. It goes back to earlier times when the decoration was used to accentuate the beauty of the ivory-colored, finely crackled earthenware itself.



A vase decorated with a branch with cherry blossom buds symbolizing the beginning of spring, painted in iron brown on a yellow-glaze ground, H. 13cm. Illegible signed. Early Meiji.



The vase has a form called yuhuchun, known for the elegant S-shape curve from the mouth rim toward the bottom. It's decorated with flowering purple and white hydrangeas with green foliage. H. 40cm. Signed Makuzu Kozan Sei, ca. 1900



Vase of a meiping form vase by Ito Tozan. Decoration in white moriage, red and gold enamel amongst young, leafy paulownia growth in moriage gosu blue. H. 15.5cm



Vase with branches of maple trailing from the short everted neck of the vase and extending down towards the foot, against a plain, crackled cream ground; signed Yabu Meizan. H. 24.6cm

## Nature in relief

Unlike Kinkozan and other producers from Kyoto, there were others who chose to pursue taka-ukibori (sculptural relief) instead, creating elaborate vessels adorned with delicate, highly realistic, miniature representations of the rich nature Japan has to offer. Miyagawa Kozan was the greatest of them. His works, known as Makuzu ware, inherit the traditional Kyo-yaki style while the application of strikingly elaborate, sculptural decoration called taka-ukibori (sculptural relief) is specific for Kozan. Chin Jukan is another great artist working in high relief.



A vase with lotus plants and ducks, H. 36 cm by Miyagawa Kozani. ca 1870.



A vase with roses and pigeons by Miyagawa Kozani. ca 1880



A brown glaze vase with crabs by Miyagawa Kozan, 1881 H. 36.5cm.



A box in the form of a rat sitting on a turnip by Chin Jukan. H. 9,7 cm.

## Temples and palaces

Although temples and palaces are products of people, their location is often so intrigued by the landscape that they are absorbed into it and become part of it. Some famous are often depicted on Satsuma-ware, others are shot from the imagination of the maker and placed in an imaginary Japanese landscape. .



An oviform vase with cover, decorated in red, gilt, green, white and blue enamel with a topographical view of Fujisan above the Imperial Palace, moat and the Offices of The Imperial Household at Kojimachi in Tokyo; the cover, with kiku knob finial, decorated with a design of mille-fleurs on a red and gilt ground of flowerheads and scrolling karakusa, signed on the base and body, Kinkozan Zo, with similar impressed mark also on the base; Meiji period, H. 24cm.



A temple in mountain landscape and carp with wisteria in cartouches. 15 1/2 x 7 1/2 in. diam. Sozan for Kinkozan.



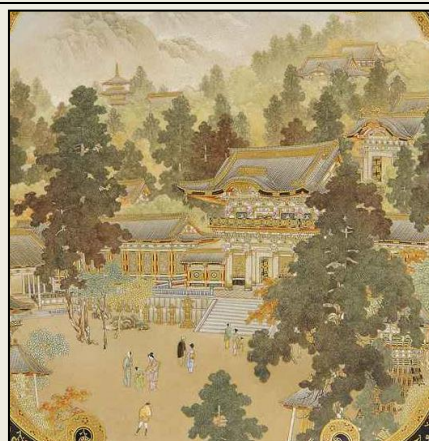
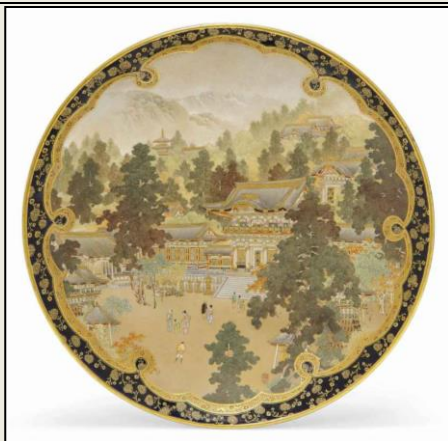
A plate depicting an imperial palace by Sozan, diam. 25 cm. Meiji period.



A baluster vase designed in gilt and polychrome enamels depicting shrines and temples of Nikkō. It shows exactly the elements of the temple as Hishidori the large stone tori (door) with Tokugawa family mon, Gojunotu pagoda, Mausoleum of Ieyasu Tokugawa and the large incense urns. Signed Gyokuzan. H. 31cm.



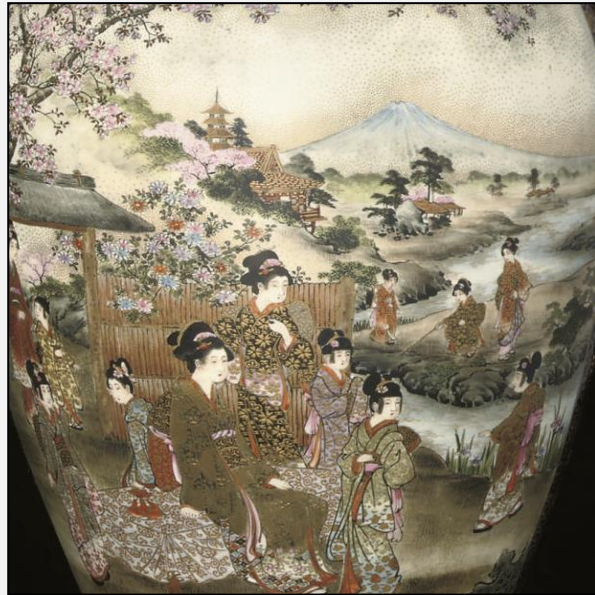
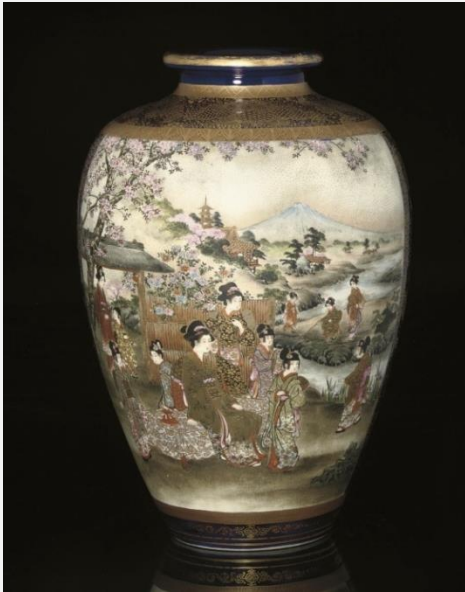
A bowl depicting a young woman from the merchant class strolling along the banks of Agi Pond with Hoo-do (Phoenix Hall) in the background set within the precincts of Byodo-in, signed with Koshida and Shozan, Diam. 15.5cm.



A Meiji period plate, depicting Nikko Shrine amongst trees Signed kinkozan, with seal of Kinsui. Diam. 23 cm.

## Mount Fuji

Mount Fuji, of course, can be seen on many, many Satsuma objects varying in size and quality. Since Mount Fuji is almost symbolic for Japan, it is mostly depicted on souvenirs and other mass-produced exportware, with a corresponding quality. The vases shown here are an exception compared with the enormous amount of rather inferior products, made for mass export or to sell in the country itself as a cheap souvenir for the increasing number of tourists visiting the country. Not that these vases had a different purpose, Satsuma ware like this was all meant for export only, but the quality differs and high quality ware was rare.



A finely decorated vase with Mount Fuji towering in the background and the whole on a dark blue ground and gilt with stylised floral and wave designs, signed Shuzan – H.31.5cm.



A similar vase having two reticulated handles, depicting a small village with Mt. Fuji in the background. an unidentified signature. H. 11.5 cm.

## 7. Daily life in Old Japan

Satsuma pottery from the Meiji period shows a multitude of images what shows Japan according the way the West like to see it. By all means that image is not Japan from the moment it was made. It is even rare to find an image that is a current representation of Meiji-japan. You will usually find a romanticized image of ancient Japan, which goes far back in history, often to the Heian period that lasted from 794 to 1185, the last period in Japan's classical history.



By looking at the clothing and hair of the figures shown, you can get an impression of what period is being depicted. For both men and women in Japan, the haircut was an important means to tell someone's status, wealth and rank in society. There are hairstyles that are only worn by nobility, royalties and married women. For example, a woman with long, straight hair with side locks clipped to the cheek always always dates from the Heian period. This type of hairstyle, known as the Hime Katto or the princess cut was only for women at the imperial court during the Heian period. The same applies to men for whom the chonmage is a type of hairstyle that was made by shaving the center of the head all the way to the middle of the back of the crown. The remaining hair is tied in a ponytail, the end of which is placed in a top knot at the back of the head. It is associated with Samurai because the hair was cut so that he could keep his helmet on his head during the fight. Later in the Edo

period it was considered a status symbol in Japanese society and only men of high rank and status such as nobles and samurai were allowed to wear this hairstyle.

So, by watching the hairstyle, but also the clothing and type of headwear, one can trace a lot to the period what is depicted on the image. Judging from what one can see on Satsuma ware, ancient Japan seems to be populated mainly by nobles, samurai and other high-ranking figures, a world in which their ladies are beautiful and do not have much else to do than strolling and enjoying the beautiful nature or to play with their children. It is rare to find a depiction of the everyday life of ordinary people on satsuma ware. But once again, Satsuma ware was exportware and the artists showed us the rich history of their beautiful country, just as we wanted to see.

## Village life

Japan has over 6000 islands and is covered with mountains, short rivers, forested slopes and irregular, beautiful lakes and small, fertile plains. In that beautiful landscape are countless small villages where people lead their simple lives. This simple existence of fishermen and farmers is what one can find on Satsuma earth. In most cases, however, people do not play the main role, they are absorbed in the larger whole of mountains, rivers and forests. It is the Japanese beautiful nature that is shown.



On this vase of 31 cm by Hozan we see a village with both ordinary and higher class families. On one side a small fishermen's village along the river or a lake, the other scene shows the residence of a wealthy family surrounded by mountains and forests. It dates from the Meiji period, around 1900..





A small fisherman's village along the river, the houses on piles, a man preparing for fishing.



A village scene on a 15 cm. bowl by Kanzan. Although the village looks like a small rural village, the people walking in it are dressed and haircutted as nobles and other high ranked citizens. The men are cut in chonmage style, the women in Kushi-maki style. Unlike the upper-class women, ordinary women did not use elaborate designs or ornaments unless it was a special occasion.



A beautiful 11.4 cm high Kinkozan vase depicting the back garden of an ordinary family. Nothing is romanticized but just as it is in real life: an ordinary garden with roosters, chickens and chicks with a khaki, an empty bucket and some rubbish on the ground, the laundry hangs on the stakes to dry. A timeless image of both centuries ago and today.

### Street life



A pair of vases, signed Takayama kore (wo) tsukuru, Meiji Period (late 19th century). The cylindrical vases decorated in typical coloured enamels and gilt with street musicians, 24cm. high. Note the dress and haircuts of the public.



A vase signed Kyoto Ryozan with shimazu mon, late 19th century. Decorated in various enamels and gilt with six panels in relief depicting a street scene with a shopping public in a bigger city. H. 25.8cm.



A peaceful scene of people walking in the town, nothing specials to do, just doing some time with the family enjoying a free day, talking with other people, the children amuse themselves, a small kid is sitting on fathers shoulders. A sakepot, signed Hattori, H. 12 cm.

On the market



Ar vase depicting a market scene, by Kinkozan.



Another Market "selling fish" scene on a small kogo by Kinkozan,



Another vase with bulbous form, decorated with a street market scene, H. 20 cm.

### A day on the beach



A nice and rarely seen image of people strolling on the beach, as depicted on a small 10 cm koro by Kinkozan.

## A wedding ceremony



An official moment as depicted on a 16 cm tall vase by Hattori. Assumably it is a wedding ceremony, the moment at which the marriage is officially recorded by signing the paper on the table by the lady in front and the man behind the table. Until the Meiji Era in 1868, samurai families were the only ones who formalized their marriages. Ordinary Japanese rarely had their marriages formalized or had any kind of wedding or ceremony. Compare the depiction on the vase with this engraving "Mariage Japonais" in "Le Japon" by Edmond Villetard de Prunières, published in 1879.



## Shunga Satsuma

Shunga (春画) literally translates to Spring what is in Japanese a popular euphemism for sex (as in prostitution: baishun 売春) literally 'sell Spring'). Shunga is best known in the west by the pillow books, harmonica folded books with erotic scenes. Although the prints look as pornography, it is not seen as such in Japanese tradition but merely a depiction of everyday life of ordinary people who like to enjoy sex in the privacy of their homes.

On satsumaware Shunga art is very rare to find. This kogo is from outside nicely decorated but nothing special, the true surprise is when you open the box and see two scenes of a couple making love.



## Teaceremony

Drinking tea is elevated to an art form in Japan, which can sometimes last for hours, depending on the type of ceremony. The chakai is a relatively simple gathering with sweets, thin tea and possibly a light meal. A chaji, on the other hand, is much more formal and usually includes a full Kaiseki meal, followed by sweets, thick tea (ko, koicha) and thin tea, with everything concentrated around the tea to enjoy the tea optimally. The tea ceremony is a serious matter, it requires a heavy preparation, including Ikebana, the art of making flower arrangements.



Satsuma plate, depicts dignitaries at a tea ceremony being served by geisha girls. 15.3 cm in diameter, signed Kozan (but not Makuzo)



A wonderful detailed Satsuma Vase with two panels, one panel depicts two women on a veranda of a traditional Japanese house under a maple tree arranging flowers probably for the tea ceremony. a scene of women preparing for the Tea Ceremony. The other panel, no less beautiful depicts the backyard of a rural house, and is dhow before. The vase is 11,4 cm and has an elaborate gilt signature within floral cartouche *Kinkozan zo, Dai Nihon Teikoku*, and impressed seal *Kinkozan zo*, Meiji period (late 19th century).



## 8. A view on the Outside World

Because Satsuma pottery was mainly focused on export during the Meiji, the vast majority of it was intended to enchant the West with the mysterious world of then unknown Japan. It was a world of geishas and samurais, of gods and demomes and the beauty of Japanese nature. Incidentally, however, you also see examples on Satsuma work that is a representation of the world outside of Japan. As we are used to the typical Japanese images on Satsuma, it is sometimes strange to see Japanese pottery and cowboys or wayang dolls, it does not belong together. It is therefore relatively rare and always surprising to find these images on Satsuma earthenware. In this chapter we try to give you some examples of Satsuma work depicting a view on the world outside.



Indonesia has been a Dutch colony for 3 centuries until WW2, and for this reason many Dutch and other European families were living there. After the decolonization many families returned to Holland and brought memorabilia with them as keris, silverware and paintings. The **Wajang figures** are favourite subjects since they are very specific for the Javanese culture. They are depicted on all kind of object as boxes, teaspoons and walldecorations. On true Satsuma ware however it is very rare. This Satsuma vase, height 19 cm depicts two Wajang figures and was probably ordered in the early 20th century by one of these families.



One of the most spectacular discoveries in the 20th century was the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922 by Howard Carter. The discovery of the grave in the Valley of the Kings was world news and convulsed a craze for ancient **Egypt**, just like a few decades before the opening of Japan had sparked a global frenzy for Japanese exoticism. The so-called "Nile style" became a sort of brand that could be used to flog everything from luxury goods to mass-produced biscuit tins and ashtrays. Undoubtedly this 20 cm high Satsuma vase dates from this period of Egypt - madness.



It's hard to see, but this very tall 91 cm. vase has several panels depicting a typical **European garden** scene. Young men and women together, talking, laughing, playing music and courting each other. The whole exudes the atmosphere of an 18th century French rococo tapestry, and given the colours and style of the paintwork, it most likely was copied after such a tapestry.



Busts like this are very unusual in Japanese tradition. This **bust of Columbus** was apparently made for the Chicago Columbian Fair of 1893 to show the world that Japan had an open eye for western art. The bust itself is executed in bisque so unglazed, and the lower part in Satsuma style enameled and gilt with butterflies, set on a separately formed stepped base with paulownia panels above chrysanthemum heads, inscribed Nihon Nishikion Tenraido. Height 30 cm.



A Satsuma vase like this piece, was clearly meant for export and the Victorian style suggest a date around 1900 , but given the kind of marriage it is more likely a 1930's piece. It depicts a wonderful image of "east meets west": A Hō-ō , the mythical Japanese Phoenix appears to have the wings in the colours of the American flag. This is clearly done by intention, what makes it a rare and beautifully done piece. It's 36 cm tall.



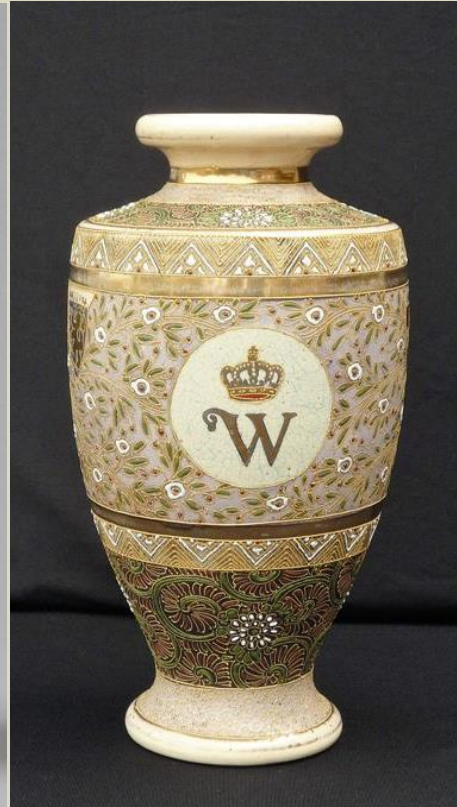
The images on this vase are clearly a copy of an old print with a group of Dutch people and a ship. Since 1609, the Dutch East India Company had a trading post on the island of Hirado. The departure of the Portuguese left the Dutch employees of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) as the only Westerners with trade access to Japan. The vase seems to be a sort of memorandum of their presence in Japan. Given the size of the crackle on this vase, it was made in the Taisho period or later years



This vase, early 20th century, with scenes of folk paintings on cards, along with an English inscription with good wishes for Christmas, H. 5 12.5 cm. was a gift for an English or American friend. An English text on a Satsuma vase is unique. Although Satsuma products were presented many times, it is very rare to find one that is as personalized as this vase.



A Satsuma vase in honor of the 25th anniversary of the reign of Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands (dated 1923). It is unknown who gave this order to the maker (Seizan). It is known, however, that there are several models of this design, with only minimal variations in shape or size and all made by Seizan. No other variations on this theme are known. Assumably it was ordered by the government as a gift to heads of state or embassies on the occasion of the anniversary.



Satsuma pottery decorated with geishas, the mount fuji or many gods was a nice souvenir for the western visitor to take home after a shorter or longer stay in Japan. Such souvenirs, not too large and not too expensive, were therefore made in large numbers for the increased flow of Westerners that Japan wanted to see with its own eyes. However, Satsuma work could also be made for the benefit of the tourist industry in other parts of the world. This teacup (without saucer) with an image of the Cathedral of Calcutta was clearly made to order for a souvenir shop in that city.



It is unclear whether this 32 cm. high "Nippon" vase was made to order for the American tourist industry or an idea that was spontaneously implemented under the influence of the popular Karl May books (Old Shatterhand and Winnetou) or Hollywood films. The Western was the most popular Hollywood genre in the 1930s. It is possible that the vase dates from this period, which is referred to as Showa 1. Probably made by a company "Imperial Nippon", but not known in what years it was in business.



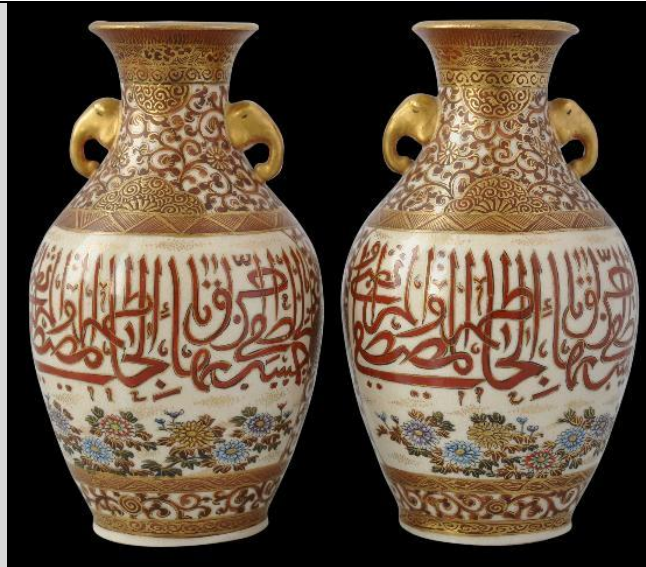
According to the Ebay seller, this enameled Satsuma pin with the Hawaiian coat of arms was given by the Japanese consulate to Queen Kapiolani in 1886 on the anniversary of Kalakaua. Although this cannot be verified and the quality is not as one might expect from an official gift to a queen, it is indeed a remarkable object. It measures 1 7/8 inches.



A very rare pair of small (15cm) Satsuma vases with Arabic "thuluth" inscription, made for the Islamic markets of Persia, Ottoman Turkey,



northern India and/or South-East Asia. The meaning of the inscription is not known, possibly a short verse from the Koran. This type of Arabic epigraphy is often found on Chinese porcelain and bronze, but it is unique on Satsuma pottery.

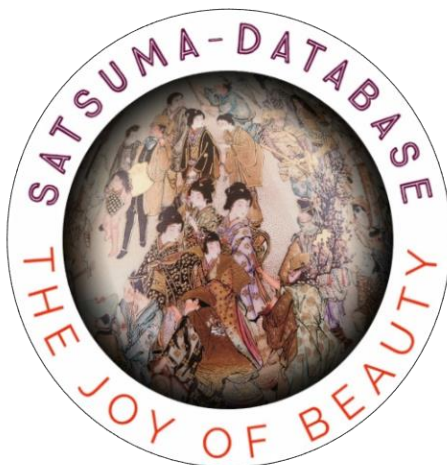


Although Chinese porcelain was imitated and copied many times by Japanese artists, it is rare to see a true Satsuma style bowl with a depiction of what looks as spectators of a Chinese dragonboat festival, what is held every year the 5th day of the 5th month. The dresses and faces of the spectators are without any doubt Chinese origin. The decoration is Japanese and includes the mons of several families.





**Note for the reader:**



Satsuma pottery was exported to the west with hundreds of thousands. The supply on western markets and auctionsites is therefore large, although most of it is of mediocre or even worse quality. Fortunately there are still plenty of beautiful and interesting pieces to discover. This data file will therefore be regularly updated with new examples that are worth displaying. And if you think you can contribute to this datafile with a delicate masterpiece or otherwise interesting Satsuma ware you own or have seen somewhere, please let us know at : [satsuma-info@gmx.com](mailto:satsuma-info@gmx.com)