



Japan: Industry and Trade

Japanese Whiskey Industry

The Japanese Whiskey Industry was founded by Glasgow University student, Masataka Taketsuru (1894-1979). Taketsuru was sent to Glasgow in 1919 to study distilling and whisky making both at the University and within Scottish distilleries. Whilst in Scotland he met and married Rita Cowan. The couple lived in Campbeltown and Taketsuru worked in the nearby Hazelburn distillery gaining practical experience. In 1920, Taketsuru and his new wife returned to Japan. He left the Settsu Shuzo Company in 1922 and was approached by Torri Shinjiro of Kotobukiya, the founder of the Suntory whiskey company, who was looking for an expert to manage his company's whiskey making project. In 1934, Taketsuru left Kotobukiya to set up his own whiskey distilling company, Nippon Kaju K K which later became Nikka. In 2002, a prize for Glasgow University Chemistry students was founded by Takeshi Taketsuru, in memory of his late father.

Trade

By 1900 the Japanese were gaining manufacturing licences from British companies for products such as steel, machinery and armaments. It had been expensive employing British and overseas experts and sending hundreds of Japanese students overseas for education and training, but by this stage the Japanese had enough expertise to start producing machinery and materials that would lead to the rapid growth of Japanese shipbuilding from the 1920s.

Most exports from Japan to Scotland between the 1860s and 1930s consisted of rice, luxury and unusual goods. Decorative arts provided another link in trade between Japan and Scotland. Japanese art greatly influenced artists like Joseph Crawhall and Charles Rennie Mackintosh.

The following extract from *Britain's Encounter with Meiji Japan* (1989) by Olive Checkland, is a description of a Japanese style room which Rebecca West saw when she was a child.



'completely furnished in the Japanese style, which was then (1900) fashionable. The end of the room was taken up with a gilded extension of the chimney piece, which rose in tiers to the ceiling, each shelf divided into several compartments, in each of which was a single curio, a Japanese cup and saucer, a vase, a carving in jade or rose quartz or ivory and about the room were lacquered tables and flimsy chairs with cushions of oriental fabric the walls were covered with straw wallpaper striped with fine gold thread.'

This curiosity with all things Japanese can be seen in store and trade catalogues of the time.

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Glasgow University student Shigeeya Kondo with his wife Nabu, 1912.



Retail and Trade catalogues with Japanese and Japanese influenced goods



Mr Taketsuru at the Kirkintilloch distillery with a colleague