

# Travel-Writing the Design Industry in Modern Japan, 1910–25

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*Sarah Teasley*

In the early summer of 1914, Japanese furniture designer and educator Kogure Joichi (1882–1943) left Tokyo for Manchuria, where he was charged by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture and Industry to supervise the creation of a new factory to produce wooden furniture for the Chinese market. Kogure went back to Tokyo in the fall of the same year, but returned to Manchuria the following summer, before going on to tour Beijing, Shanghai and other major cities in China. He compiled a market report based on this trip, which he submitted to the Ministry in the fall of 1915, and would visit China again on his way to Europe in 1921, but would not discuss the 1914 and 1915 trips in his many writings until his 1942 autobiography. In this text, in comparison to his account of an earlier posting to western Japan, Kogure's description is remarkably devoid of local actors, whether the Chinese and Manchurian employees of the factory, or the Chinese consumers whose daily life and living spaces he had observed.

Five years after Kogure's Manchurian experience, Kogure's colleague Moriya Nobuo (1893–1927) set sail for a two-year tour of Europe and the United States by way of Asia. Moriya had been recruited to teach furniture design at the newly founded Tokyo Higher School of Arts and Technology and was to survey recent trends in furniture design, education and the organizational structure of the different national industries. During his voyage, Moriya published monthly missives in a Tokyo-based professional journal, reporting both on new design trends and on daily life in the cities and nations he visited. Unlike Kogure's lack of representation of Chinese consumers and Manchurian employees, Moriya illustrated his reports with close descriptions of interactions with European consumers and professionals. In the articles, Moriya positioned himself as both an outside critic of Western furniture design and contemporary culture and an industry insider. His missives transmitted information to colleagues in Japan, and established Moriya's position both as a design professional qualified to comment authoritatively on the furniture and interiors he encountered, and as a cultural outsider, a Japanese man in a foreign world.

While with different immediate goals, and to different destinations, Kogure and Moriya's travels shared some similarities. Both men were first products and then participants in a new state system for higher technical education, and both received their postings abroad as the result of this affiliation. More importantly, both men were sent overseas by the State for the purpose of further developing a modern furniture industry in Japan, and both were expected to relay the information gained overseas with colleagues at home. Furthermore, while Moriya's trip to Europe was not directly part of Japanese colonial expansion in Asia, both trips reflected the importance of colonial expansion for the growth of the furniture industry, and the quiet but very real role that furniture design and manufacturing research played in Japan's acts of self-situation in the world order in the early twentieth century.

Moriya and Kogure's travels emerged as part of greater state strategy to develop an indigenous industry in wooden Western-style furniture, and to increase furniture industry profits in national and overseas markets. Their travels were enabled by steamships that transported design information to Japan and products and designers from it, and catalyzed by state identification of technical education as the key to modern industrial production. In the modern period, the rise of such technologies for the travel of people, goods and information accelerated the global flow of design knowledge, but how did travel and travel narratives in particular influence the formation of the furniture design industry in modern Japan, and what did the cognitive maps drawn by traveling Japanese designers have on them? This chapter employs the travel records of Kogure and Moriya, two seminal figures in the formation of the Japanese furniture and interior design industries, to illuminate the impact of travel in two phases of a process that we might call self-situation: first, the process by which furniture and interior design professionals attempted to create a site for themselves within the higher education system and the industrial structure of modern Japan, and second, Japanese designers' situation of themselves as Japanese nationals in the world.

Designers traveled within the Japanese archipelago, first to the educational centers of Tokyo and Kyoto to pursue higher education, then out to supposedly peripheral sites within the archipelago, the rapidly expanding Japanese empire and the world at large. Travel within the archipelago allowed designers to assert the primacy of Tokyo and Kyoto as centers for advanced design research and education, and to identify themselves with modernity from the top down, in contrast to local woodworking practices developed largely outside the state system for industrial promotion. Travel within the empire, which by the time of Kogure's trip included Okinawa, Taiwan, Korea and southern Manchuria, functioned as part of the implementation of colonial policy on a larger scale, not only by exploiting colonial resources and asserting Japanese presence,

but also by attempting to develop local markets for colonial Japanese-made goods. Travels within the empire such as Kogure's trips to Manchuria and China and his recollections of these trips during the Pacific War also allowed designers to recreate imperial power relations between urban centers and colonies as personal experience, and to transmit this system through its narration.

By contrast, travel outside Asia led designers both to position themselves as members of an elite international profession, and to assert national-cultural difference between Japan, Asia and the west. Prior to their departures, designers like Kogure Joichi and Moriya Nobuo understood themselves as participants in an international community of modern furniture-makers and interior designers linked by the possession of specialist knowledge gained through higher education. However, while in Europe and the United States, they not only gathered information about design practice in foreign nations but also represented another foreign nation: Japan. Thus, time abroad not only provided them with concrete ideas for bettering the Japanese design industry upon their return, but also brought them to question and ultimately to reconfirm their relationship as individuals within the furniture design movement, the Japanese nation-state and the modern world order. Together, travel within the archipelago, the empire and the world helped designers in the early years of the profession create a dynamic professional and national identity whose shifting registers both strengthened the profession and revealed its instability.

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## THE GROWTH OF THE FURNITURE AND INTERIOR DESIGN INDUSTRY IN MODERN JAPAN

In the early twentieth century, furniture and interior designers in Japan had only begun to inhabit a disciplinary home from which they could set forth. This is not to say that the practices of furniture-making and interior design did not exist before the late nineteenth century. To the contrary, *shitsurai*, the selection and placement of artworks and other objects appropriate for the season, was integral to the overall staging for tea practice. Among carpenters (*daiku*) who specialized in furniture (*sashimono*) some master carpenters produced *hinagata-bon*, woodblock-printed compendiums of drawings for tables, shelving and other furnishings. However, the conception of the designer as a creative individual responsible not for the material object but for the idea of the thing – its function, form, construction or manufacturing methods and decoration – and for legible plans enabling its reproduction by an anonymous worker in industrial mass

production dates to changes following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, during which the Tokugawa regime which had governed Japan for over 250 years was dismantled, and modern economic, legal, educational and other systems based on those of modern nation-states such as France, England and Germany installed. The shift from a unified design and manufacturing process within local workshops to a factory division of labor distinguishing designer and maker began with designs (*zuan*) for export ceramics and other crafts for display and sale at international expositions beginning with Vienna in 1874, and grew through the expansion of state-sponsored higher technical education after the mid-1890s (IMPEY ET AL. 1995).

Unlike export crafts, furniture-making did not immediately experience similar industrialization. For most of the Meiji period, indigenous furniture workshops coexisted with new workshops specializing in ornate carved furniture for the export and elite domestic markets. In the early 1900s, the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce identified wooden furniture as a lucrative use for the nation's timber resources, and began sponsoring furniture-manufacturing research and publications. This period also saw the institutionalization of building construction and furniture-making as separate educational and professional areas, as technical and higher technical schools reorganized woodworking (*mokko*) departments based on the earlier concept of carpentry as including both into separate courses (IMPEY ET AL. 1995).

In contrast, interior design developed in response to the need for trained professionals to decorate the interiors of the Western-style buildings produced for banks, government offices and elite entertainment spaces, including Western-style houses for industrialists and the peerage. Design programs in the Tokyo and Kyoto Higher Technical Schools emphasized Western-style interiors, and functioned as a corollary to the architectural course in the Engineering College at the Tokyo Imperial University (STEWART 2003; REYNOLDS 2004; CHOI 2003). Graduates joined the design departments of local governments, general contractors and department stores, and worked in tandem with architects.

Thus, interior design and furniture-making developed as separate professions. The two came together with the establishment of a professional organization for higher-school trained educators and practitioners of both fields, the Kenyokai, or Oak Leaf Association, in 1918. By the 1920s, the popularization of Western-style interiors, the expansion of higher technical education and the growth of department store furniture departments meant increased employment for designers, and self-recognition among designers, particularly those affiliated with the Kenyokai, of their role as specialists in modern furniture design and interior decoration as an international profession. Travel played an important role in the creation of the disciplines of furniture design

<sup>1</sup> The Iwakura Mission traveled to the United States and Europe between 1871 and 1873 to observe Western institutions and practices. See Kunitake 2002.

and interior decoration. In the late nineteenth century, after the success of the Iwakura Mission of 1871–73, the Ministry of Education established its Overseas Research Fellow system.<sup>1</sup> The system sent recent graduates of institutions such as the Imperial University, the Tokyo School of Fine Arts and the higher technical schools to study abroad to familiarize themselves with new technologies and educational practices, with the understanding that Fellows would return to teach in Japan. While stressing the traveler's responsibilities to the nation, the Overseas Research Fellow system also recalled the English grand tour, with its emphasis on personal refinement. Fellows in a creative field, in particular, could link personal refinement to improved artistic production.

Designers used information gained during their experiences abroad to further their personal work, and shared this information through their work as educators, and through publications including textbooks, articles in industry-specific journals, speeches and books. Earlier overseas postings with direct impact on the design industry included those of Notomi Kaijiro (1844–1918) and Hirayama Eizo (1855–1914), who remained in Vienna after traveling there as part of the Japanese delegation to the 1873 International Exposition, then returned to found regional technical schools for export crafts production (Notomi) and create designs for export products (Hirayama) (FUJITA 2001; AMAGAI 2003). After 1900, artist Asai Chu (1856–1907) and architect Takeda Goichi (1872–1938) encountered Art Nouveau during postings to Europe, and translated this style to their designs and work as educators in the design department at the Kyoto Higher Technical School (MIYAJIMA 2003). Similarly, in 1910 designer Yasuda Rokuzo (1874–1942), a graduate and faculty member of the Tokyo Higher Technical School, traveled to Vienna, where he studied under Josef Hoffmann. Yasuda's experience of Austrian design education was key to the establishment of the Tokyo Higher School of Arts and Technology in 1920, and thus to the preparatory trips of Moriya and his colleagues.

Like architects trained at the Tokyo Imperial University, designers like Moriya and Kogure studied Western-style drafting and construction techniques, and were often better versed in historical styles and contemporaneous developments in England, Austria or Germany than in vernacular traditions. The disjuncture between a state-sponsored design system catering to exports and an expanding but nonetheless high-end local market on the one hand, and a local woodworking industry producing traditional furnishings on the other, eased somewhat in the 1900s, concomitant with the appearance of an urban bourgeoisie and popularization of the concept of home as a physical space (SAND 2003). However, since most Japanese homes retained *tatami* mats and a lifestyle based on sitting and sleeping on the floor until the 1950s, in the 1920s, when Moriya Nobuo visited London, furniture and interior design researchers consid-

ered themselves part of an international profession that spanned the globe from South Kensington to Grand Rapids, but remained marginal within the domestic economy. Travel and the recording of travel experiences in print for a mass audience was one way for them to begin to position them in the center. Not only did it introduce new practices and ideas, but it also demanded that designers identify a place from which to start and boundaries between ‘home’ and ‘away’, and provided them with a textual genre – the travel report – by which to disseminate and justify that starting point.

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## KOGURE JOICHI IN MANCHURIA

Kogure Joichi’s 1914 Manchurian assignment allowed him to transcend the limits of his work in Tokyo while reinforcing his identification as a professional practitioner of modern design and an imperial subject. In April 1914, Kogure was posted to Antung (now Dandong), a city on the east bank of the Yalu River, the border between Manchuria and the Korean peninsula. There, he served as head technician for a new furniture factory operated by the Yalu River Lumber Company, a former Qing state firm reorganized as a Sino–Japanese joint venture in 1908 (ORYOKU-KO (ORYOKKO) SAIBOKU KOSHI, 1919). Kogure was to prepare the new factory’s facilities, determine efficient processing methods and select Japanese heads for the machining, furniture construction and finishing divisions. He returned to Tokyo in the fall of 1914, leaving behind the division heads to oversee actual operations.

Like the Twenty-One Demands that Japan submitted to China in January 1915, the trip must be understood as part of a larger Japanese strategy to gain political and economic power in China that only accelerated after the outbreak of the World War I destabilized the earlier colonial balance of power. After victory over China in the Sino–Japanese War of 1894–95, Japan gained Taiwan as a colony. Following the Portsmouth Treaty that concluded the Russo–Japanese War of 1904–05, Japan occupied the Liaodong Peninsula and acquired the right to build railroads in southern Manchuria, then annexed Korea in 1910. Japanese-controlled areas on the continent asserted Japanese presence to other colonial nations like the United States, Germany and England, and offered the economic benefits of gaining natural resources. The Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce’s Forestry Agency conducted surveys of forests, industry and markets in China, Korea and other areas from the early 1900s. In the mid-1910s, after the completion of the South Manchuria Railway lines and construction of civilian infrastructure like schools and hospitals necessary for colonization, the Agency identified the development of the Manchurian forestry industry and cultivation of the

2 *In Brave New Empire: Manchuria and the Culture of Wartime Imperialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), Louise Young discusses similar Japanese experiences taking advantage of the relative freedom of the colonies to explore new opportunities. See particularly pp. 241–303.

Chinese market as lucrative areas for growth. The Ministry urged corporations like the Sumitomo Forestry Company to open Manchurian operations, and sent representatives like Kogure to direct the operations of existing firms.

The terminal for the Antung–Mukden branch line of the South Manchuria Railway, the gateway between Manchuria and the Korean peninsula, and a shipping port for eastern Manchurian timber, Antung was a logical site for the new factory (FIGURE 4.1). Some Antung factories specialized in making wood boxes for fertilizer and other soy products that dominated Manchurian exports, but the city’s principal role in the lumber industry was as a distribution centre for logs floated down the Yalu River and processed into beams for construction in the city’s sawmills (*Ringyo Gaho* 1917) (FIGURE 4.2). In contrast, the Yalu River Logging Company factory was intended to manufacture Japanese- and Western-style furniture for use in Manchuria by Japanese families, and for direct export to China (KOGURE 1942). The shift reflected a larger Ministry strategy to increase logging industry profits by manufacturing the entire product in Japan or its colonies before export, rather than exporting raw materials or rough materials for construction.

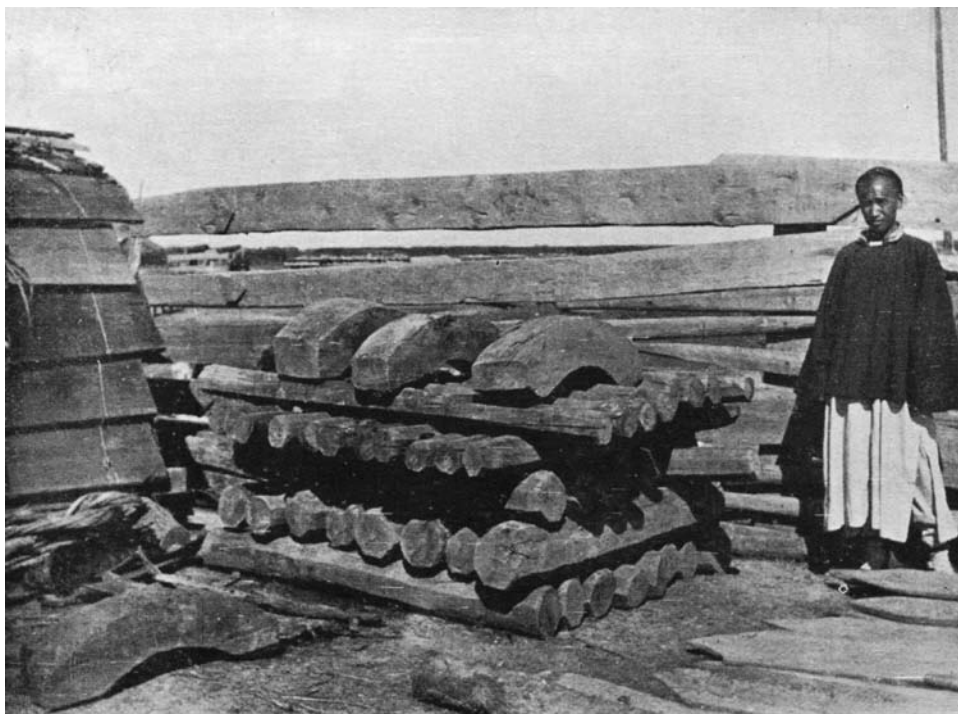
Kogure, an expert on wood processing and furniture manufacturing working within the state system already, was ideal for the assignment. Kogure graduated in architecture from the Industrial Arts Instructor Training Institute of the Tokyo Higher School of Industrial Arts in 1908, and was assigned to a joint research initiative in wood-processing techniques based in Tokyo. He published the results with Tokyo trade publisher Hakubunkan as *Zoki riyo saishin kagu seisaku ho* (*The Latest Manufacturing Techniques for Furniture Using Miscellaneous Woods*) in two volumes in 1914 and 1916, and coauthored a series of furniture designs for use in woodwork education, *Mokko seizu oyobi seisakuho: Shuko tekiyo* (*Drafting and Fabrication Techniques for Woodwork: Suitable for Handcraft [Education]*), also from Hakubunkan, in 1913. As an educator and researcher, Kogure could develop processes and suggest new applications, but work at an actual manufacturer fell outside his purview. The assignment to the colonies, in an area under Japanese control but not part of ‘Japan proper’, allowed him to apply his research in an actual production setting.<sup>2</sup>

Developing the Yalu River Lumber Company’s manufacturing output would strengthen Japan’s colonial claim to the region and capitalize on potential local markets. Yet Kogure’s 1942 autobiography, in which he published an account of his time in Manchuria and reproduced his 1915 Ministry report, records little interaction with factory employees or Chinese consumers (KOGURE 1942). One exception was an exhibition held at the local products exhibition hall several months after Kogure’s arrival:



4.1

*A lumber yard at Antung, c. 1903, Noshomusho Sanrinkyoku, Ed., Shinkan ryokoku shinrin shisatsu fukumeisho (Report of Observations on Forestry in China and Korea), Tokyo, Noshomusho Sanrinkyoku, 1903, np.*



4.2

*Illustration from the section on Antung lumber yards in the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, 1905, Report of Observations on Forestry and the Condition of Wood Products Commerce in China, Noshomusho, Tokyo.*



3 All translations unless otherwise noted are by the author.

After two or three months, we had stockpiled a decent number of products, so we planned a large exhibition and sales event to introduce the new factory broadly to society. Many important Japanese and Chinese officials came, and the event had a great advertising effect.

(KOGURE 1942: 26)<sup>3</sup>

Kogure's elision of 'society' and 'important Japanese and Chinese officials' implies that he was not yet considering actual Chinese consumers, but rather asserting the factory's role as a sign of Japanese colonial presence. Furthermore, while Antung had a sizeable Japanese colony by the mid-1910s, including merchants as well as a military detachment, the only visitors mentioned by name were Yoshida Shigeru (1878–1967), then the consul at Antung, Count Makino Nobuaki (1861–1949), temporarily in Antung to visit his daughter – Yoshida's wife Yukiko (1888–1941) – and the Japanese head of the design division. As an educator at a technical school, in Tokyo Kogure would have had few if any chances to mix with elite statesmen like Makino, who served in multiple cabinets and would later represent Japan at the Paris Peace Conference of 1919, and Yoshida, who would go on to lead the Liberal Party and become Prime Minister after World War II, so the chance to present the factory's work to such representatives of the metropolitan elite would be an unusual opportunity worth mentioning. But references to Tokyo society only situate Antung even more firmly as peripheral to the metropole rather than a place in its own right.

Kogure's account of the China trip similarly lacked local actors. Kogure returned to the continent in the summer of 1915 to survey living conditions in Beijing, Tianjin, Jinan, Tsingtao, Shanghai and Nanjing as market research. However, his report relates neither local conditions nor interactions with residents who would presumably compose that market. Instead, following the model of market reports set by earlier Ministry visitors to China such as the 1905 *Shinkoku ringyo oyobi mokuzai shokyo shisatsu fukumeisho* [*Report of Observations on Forestry and the Condition of Wood Products Commerce in China*], the account reads as a dry, analytical report on economic prospects and marketing strategies for furniture based on the living habits of 'the Chinese' (*Shinajin*) as a collective (KOGURE 1942: 28–31). Like photographs by other Japanese visitors to the continent that included Manchurian, Chinese or Korean workers in the image but did not mention their presence in the accompanying caption, for example a photograph of the Antung lumber yards from the 1905 publication whose caption describes the wheel parts seen piled up, but does not mention the Manchurian worker standing beside them, Kogure was merely following convention. His use of the convention also embodies the standard colonial strategy of asserting dominance over the colonial other through the refusal of naming, indicating the extent to which Kogure chose to identify with the colonial project.

In general, Kogure's textual records of overseas travels give only slight weight to interaction with local residents. Following the Ministry of Education's decision to establish the Tokyo Higher School of Arts and Technology in 1919, Kogure became head of the school's woodcraft department, and, like colleagues including Moriya Nobuo, traveled overseas again in 1921–23 to survey wooden furniture production in Europe and the United States. During his trip, he published descriptions of sites visited in the monthly journal of the *Ken'yokai*. While more forthcoming about Kogure's personal reactions to the style and scale of sites visited, as appropriate for articles published as letters to colleagues in a professional society journal rather than as market reports, these missives similarly avoid personal encounters, and privilege manufacturing processes and general trends in usage that could be useful for product development in Japan. *Beikokujin no seikatsu to sono jutaku* (Americans' Lifestyle and Their Houses), published in the November 1921 issue of the *Ken'yokai* journal *Mokko to soshoku* (*Woodworking and Decoration*), provides a list of American customs, for example, 'Americans are always thinking about how to amuse themselves well' (KOGURE 1921: 2). Kogure illustrated each statement not by relating conversations with actual Americans, but through observations of mass actions such as the weekend crowds at amusement parks, and offered such generalized interpretations as 'In summary, Americans' amusements are almost entirely like those of children; there is a general taste for competition, and for amusements that offer danger and thrills' (KOGURE 1921: 3). After the United States, Kogure traveled on to England, and his first report from England does mention a visit with the architect Raymond Unwin (1863–1940), one of the few non-Japanese named in his article (KOGURE 1922). However, in this article too Kogure related not his actual interactions with Unwin, but rather Unwin's body of work and its impact on British urban planning.

This approach contrasts sharply to Kogure's accounts of an earlier trip within Japan, to the city of Tokushima, on the island of Shikoku in western Japan. Soon after graduation in 1908, Kogure spent several months in Tokushima, ostensibly teaching in the prefectural technical school, but spending much of his time studying vernacular furniture-making techniques at local workshops. His record of this trip in his autobiography focuses on interactions with teachers and members of the local furniture industry, including stories of dinners, visits and actual conversations (KOGURE 1942). In other words, Kogure's Tokushima recollections are a description not of Tokushima itself, but of his personal experiences within Tokushima society. Unlike the 1915 Chinese market report and descriptions of American furniture factories in 1921, both of which convey practical, empirical information to colleagues who could not encounter them directly, Kogure recounted his Tokushima trip within his autobiography, so the choice to employ

- 4 In *The Tokaido Road: Travel and Representation in Edo and Meiji Japan* (New York and London: Routledge 2004), Jilly Traganou explains the literary conventions of diaries and other travel writing in Japan from the premodern to modern periods. See chapter 3, 'Traveling Practices and Literary Tokaido', pp. 99–144.

a more personal tone and describe human interactions fits the more personal tone of an autobiography. Furthermore, very real linguistic barriers would have limited the extent of his overseas interactions. Despite this, the stark difference between Kogure's vivid recollections of human interactions in Tokushima and only cursory coverage of them in the Antung chapter of the same autobiography also indicate Kogure's choice to position himself with the woodworkers of Tokushima, and in contrast to the residents of Antung.

Even when surveying furniture manufacturing in Europe and North America, Kogure positioned himself as having been sent 'out' on a fact-finding mission rather than having arrived at the source of Western-style furniture. Paradoxically, though, the closer Kogure was to home, the more precarious his position representing the metropole. His affiliation with a national educational institution under direct control of the Ministry of Education still identified him with Tokyo-based central authority, but he represented a profession that remained economically peripheral and – as the professor at a technical school in a system capped by the Imperial Universities in Tokyo and Kyoto – was only marginally elite. His accounts of local travels may have described human interaction not only because of familiarity, and because the regional designers and woodworkers mentioned were often also his readers, but also because within Japan, he had less authority to claim distance from them.

Kogure narrated his Tokushima and Manchuria trips with conventional phrases expressing the wonder and excitement of travel. Of Manchuria, he wrote:

When I look back at the early days of the founding of the Antung Lumber Mill, it was my first time to set foot on foreign ground, and there were so many truly unusual and nostalgic memories ... Everything I saw and heard was so unusual, and I had an extremely pleasant trip.

(KOGURE 1942: 24)

Since Kogure composed his autobiography in 1942, a wartime sense of urgency or the speed with which Kogure wrote the text may have kept him from literary experimentation. However, published to commemorate his sixtieth birthday, Kogure's biography was clearly meant for consumption by his peers and students. The repetition of set phrases like 'unusual and nostalgic memories' (*mezurashiku mata natukashii omoide*) that could have described a trip anywhere, not only to Antung, made it more public.<sup>4</sup>

Kogure's confession of disbelief at his assignment to the Antung project contained similar platitudes.

At the time, the Antung Lumber Mill was a newly built factory for a timber company. Its goal was to increase the use of the rich resources of the Yilu River. Faced with this sudden devel-

opment, I couldn't help but question how a complete fledgling like myself could possibly complete this important international mission. But it was an order from my former teacher, so I boldly accepted after only two replies even though I had no experience and had no idea what was lying in store for me. This one incident alone should help you imagine just how badly we lacked woodcraft technical experts at the time.

(KOGURE 1942: 24)

Kogure's statement points to the still-under-construction nature of his discipline, but is replete with conventional niceties used to downplay one's status in a particular situation, from doubting his own abilities to placing the ultimate agency not with himself but with his former teacher. Kogure's expressions of modesty position him as not the actor but the pawn in the situation, a strategy common to colonial travelers outside of Japan as well. In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt describes the tropes with which eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century European travel writers cast themselves as innocent travelers caught in larger European maneuvers for control in Africa. Pratt describes this self-positioning as 'anti-conquest', glossed as 'the strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony' (PRATT 1992: 7). In this rhetorical move:

Things happen to him and he endures and survives. As a textual construct, his innocence lies less in self-effacement than in submissiveness and vulnerability, or the display of self-effacement ... as a receptor, not an initiator, as devoid of desire as his scientific counterpart.

(Pratt 1992: 78)

According to Pratt, this was a function of an imperialist apparatus in which the reader entered a complicit fiction with the traveler-author's naïve stance and denial of agency. The refusal of knowledge was a tacit privilege that allowed unaccountability, fulfilling the imperative of innocence necessary to maintain the imperial system at home.

Pratt's wanderers were self-motivated and self-funded, while Kogure represented state institutions of control and knowledge. Furthermore, Kogure's constant self-subjugation for the good of the nation repeats the language of individual sacrifice for the larger common good mandated by the Meiji period Imperial Rescript on Education (1890) and intensified during the Pacific War. However, enough similarities exist to make Pratt's formulation useful. As an agent for the Forestry Agency, Kogure played an overt role in the imperial project, but while Pratt's false naïfs may be nominally independent, they too participated in imperial projects of mapping and classifying,

thus bringing the ‘unknown’ into a system of ‘universal’ knowledge. Given the extent to which Japan’s colonial project in Asia consciously drew on European models as a way to render the Japanese project legible and legitimate to other nations, Kogure’s self-positioning reads as normative imperialism. By using set models to narrate personal experience in the public arena of print media, Kogure subjugates his individual experience into standardized tropes that could be easily understood.

Kogure’s self-situation within already legible tropes is particularly strong in his references to national identity. Writing during the Pacific War, he tied personal experience into a standardized imagined experience of the Japanese people at war, thus locating his development as a woodcraft professional within a greater national narrative. For example, he described his feelings on leaving for Manchuria with the three Japanese factory managers as follows:

Thus the four of us pledged our lives and left Japan together. Our feelings at the time did not go as far as a final parting, but I think they must not have differed much from the feelings of the heroes who leave for the continent in response to today’s times.

(KOGURE 1942: 24)

Kogure’s invocation of ‘heroes leaving for the continent’ is standard wartime rhetoric, but significant in its choice to represent his subjective experience and chosen discipline of furniture research as resounding with that of the larger group. Kogure’s travels in Japan and Manchuria identified him with the geopolitical centre of the nation and a modern, scientific approach to the world in the form of state-sponsored academic woodcraft research in contrast with the places and people visited. This reproduced the Japanese state’s efforts to position itself as an imperial power, and compares to Pratt’s conceptualization of European travel writing as practising and participating in what she calls European ‘planetary consciousness’, one element of the larger imperialist project (PRATT 1992: 9). However, given the newness of both factory-made Western-style furniture in the Japanese economy and the Japanese presence on the Asian continent, Kogure departed aware of this instability of this identity and the power relationship it implied with the culture to be visited, and was complicit from the moment of departure with the fiction that his position entailed. Kogure was constituted both as representing the centre and by his glaring failure to represent it, or, to put it another way, by his hopelessly unavoidable subjectivity as an individual. Thus, travel exposes both the fundamental impossibility of separating individual and group subjectivity and the instability of group identifications.

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## MORIYA NOBUO IN ENGLAND

The European experiences of Kogure's colleague Moriya Nobuo amplify this point. In 1920, the year before Kogure embarked for the United States, Moriya Nobuo left on a similar trip, traveling first to London, then to the European continent and North America before returning to Tokyo in 1922. Moriya's encounters abroad gave him direct comparisons through which he strengthened his self-situation as a member of the furniture and interior design industries and the Japanese nation. However, his identifications as a designer and as a Japanese national were not always mutually complementary. Rather, he privileged first one and then the other in his interactions with locals, his interpretation of his sensory experiences of place and his narration of these interactions and experiences to a readership back in Japan. This slippage between professional and national identities was further complicated by subjective reactions that could be neither explained by nor packaged neatly into his group identities.

Like Kogure Joichi, Moriya Nobuo was a product of state promotion of the Western-style furniture and interior design industries. Moriya studied in the Industrial Design Department at the Tokyo Higher School of Industrial Art and joined general contractor Shimizu-gumi after graduation in 1915 as an interior designer. After cofounding the Kenyokai with Kogure and four other graduates, he was appointed to the faculty at the Tokyo Higher School of Arts and Technology in 1920 and sent to Europe and North America by the Ministry of Education that fall.

From his private diary and monthly missives published in the Kenyokai journal, we learn that Moriya boarded ship in Kobe in October 1920 (FIGURE 4.3), then visited Shanghai, Singapore, Colombo, Port Said, Naples and Marseilles before arriving in London in December (MORIYA 1928).

Moriya left London in July 1921 for Paris, from whence he embarked on an extended tour of European design schools, factories and craft and furniture museums. He then sailed to the United States, where he visited furniture factories in cities including Chicago and Grand Rapids before boarding ship in San Francisco for Japan. After arriving 'home' in Tokyo in June 1922 to take up his teaching post, Moriya continued to publish articles on European furniture-making practices and design education in *Woodworking and Decoration*, and actively entered designs of his own in public exhibitions, thus disseminating the knowledge he had gained. This fulfilled the duty implied in his posting as an Overseas Research Fellow to use individual experiences abroad for the betterment of his discipline and nation.

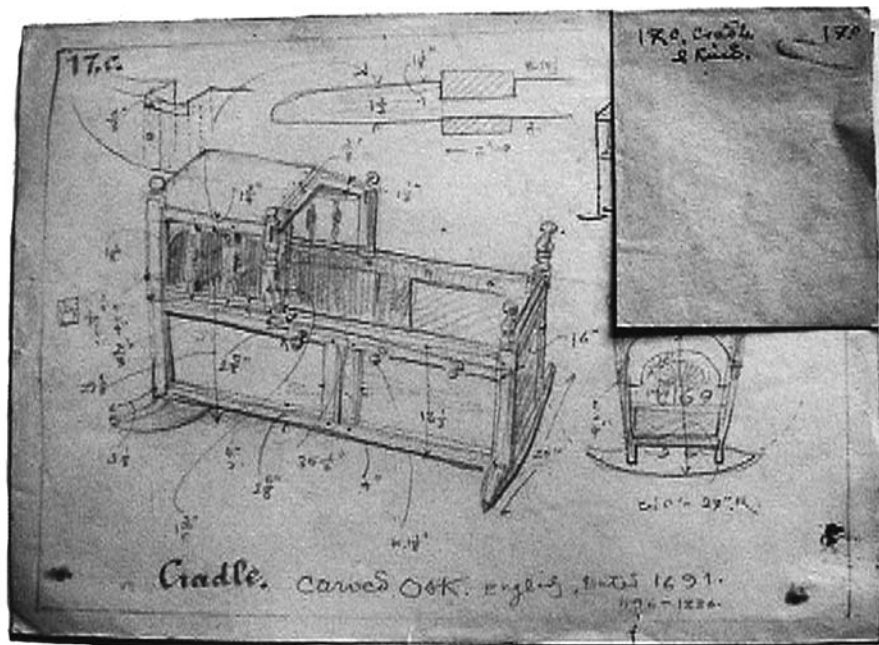
### 4.3

Illustration from the section on Antung lumber yards in the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, 1905, Report of Observations on Forestry and the Condition of Wood Products Commerce in China, Noshomusho, Tokyo.



During his travels, Moriya approached the ‘study’ of Western-style furnishings and interiors from multiple angles. He studied historical English furniture from books and by sketching English furniture in the Victoria and Albert Museum and British Museum (FIGURE 4.4). He surveyed the current state of the industry by visiting design associations, contacting manufacturers and viewing exhibitions, and enrolled in classes at the Royal College of Art and the London Community College Central School of Arts and Crafts.

As the detailed list of activities suggests, Moriya’s London articles in *Woodworking and Decoration* were highly personal yet public, written to give his colleagues a virtual experience of the spaces and flow of daily life in England which they could then use to make furniture and interiors at home. Moriya’s mission was to not only discover current trends in his field – in this case furniture-making education – but also to expe-



## 4.4

Moriya Nobuo's sketch of a seventeenth-century wooden English cradle from the collection of the South Kensington (Victoria and Albert) Museum, c. 1921, private collection.

rience firsthand how 'native users' of Western-style interiors occupied and furnished everyday spaces. He accomplished this by documenting the style, dimensions, contents and his own visual and corporeal experience of the hotel rooms, restaurants and streets of his destinations, and through a sort of participant-observer ethnography in which he visited the homes of local residents to examine the floor plan and decoration of their homes, and record the occupants' uses of space.

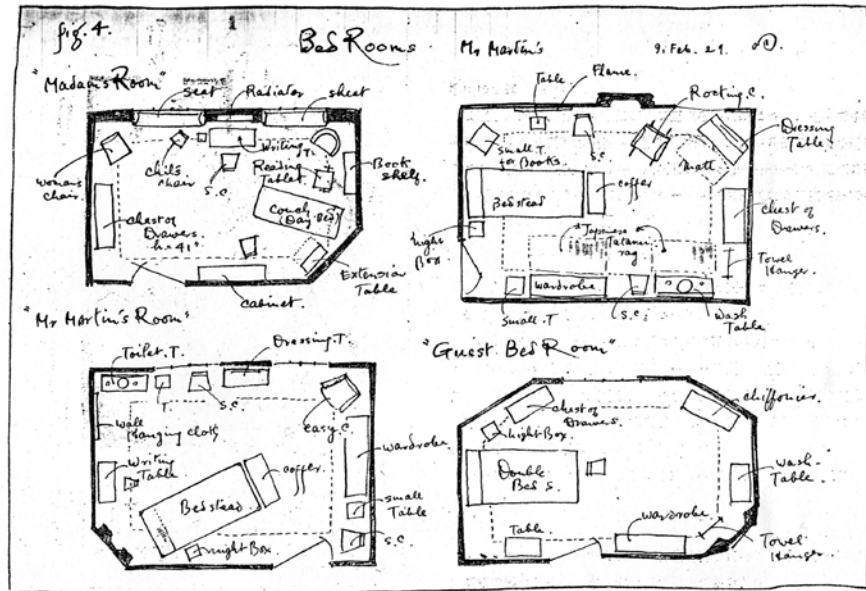
The ultimate goal of these studies was not only to enable their reproduction in Japan, but also to distill some kind of national taste or character from them, suggesting that design was both tied to its geographical or cultural origins and translatable across geographical or cultural boundaries should other conditions, namely the ability of the designer to reproduce them, be in place.<sup>5</sup> For example, 'Eikoku ni okeru jutaku no shitsunai soshoku no ittan' (A Taste of the Interior Decoration of Houses in England), a 1921 article in the *Kenyokai* journal (MORIYA 1921A), described the taste, furnishings and layout of a typical English house, framed as the record of a visit to the home of a middle-aged couple, the Martins, outside London. The article combined anecdotes, detailed description and analysis of the home's interiors and commentary on the general characteristics of English domestic interiors. Photographs and floor plans reinforced the close textual description, effectively unpacking the home's interior into specifications with which readers in Japan could recreate the spaces on their own, while

- 5 Like its counterparts in Edwardian England, much Japanese design discourse of the time ascribed national design sensibility in part to climate. See Fujii Koji, *Nihon no jutaku* (1928), as well as Watsuji Tetsuro's more general musings on climate, geography and national character in *Fudo: Ningengaku-teki kosatsu* (*A Climate: A Philosophical Study*, 1935).



## 4.5

Moriya Nobuo's sketches of bedrooms at the home of the Martins in Ewell, England, 9 February 1921, printed in Moriya Nobuo, 'Eikoku ni okeru jutaku no shitsunai soshoku no ittan' (A Taste of the Interior Decoration of Houses in England), *Mokuzai kogei* (Woodcraft), 47 (January 1923), p. 21.



anecdotes of how the afternoon was passed functioned as a practical 'user's guide' to English homes for colleagues in Japan who lacked direct experience of them.

Moriya approved of the Martins' home (FIGURE 4.5), praising its comfort, but disparaged most English taste as 'over-decorated' and 'extremely lacking in youthfulness. It has no vitality of invention' (MORIYA 1923: 12–22). In the article, he attributed this tendency to England's weather and national character, and posited a connection between climate and national taste:

In that land with its gloomy winter, people are beginning to think that somewhat brighter colors are necessary; the power that nature has over people is great. England follows exactly the opposite path from hot countries whose architecture and interiors use strong colors. Nature exerts more influence over the people who live in that place than we can know or measure. This gloomy feeling is related not only to colors but also to the form, materials, finish and other aspects of every kind of furnishing. As the history of interior decoration in England demonstrates, this truth can be observed in all things.

(MORIYA 1923: 14)

Moriya allowed that English taste was evolving to include bright, airy interiors, and used the Martins' home to exemplify specifically English good taste. However, while he pieced apart both their home and their lifestyle in such detail that a reader might recre-

ate both in Japan, Moriya also explained that English design worked only in England. He cautioned readers that ‘direct imports are one condition the Japanese are unable to like from their hearts’, and urged readers to reconfigure these elements to correspond to some kind of national Japanese taste instead (MORIYA 1921A: 7).

As he explained to British colleagues in an invited article in the English journal *The Cabinetmaker*, the key to Japan’s introduction of foreign concepts and designs was not their adoption, but their adaptation:

Japan has been, in earlier days, very much influenced by Chinese literature, arts and manufactures, but these were modified and adapted to the special conditions ruling in Japan. Geographically, China and Japan are in close proximity, but it is interesting to note that Japan has not been content slavishly to copy Chinese civilization. Similarly, should we learn anything from Europe, we shall also strive to adapt Western ideas to our conditions, and to the poetical and artistic temperament of our people. One of the prominent characteristics of our race is that we keep an open mind, and are always prepared to adopt improvements wherever we may find them.

(MORIYA 1921B: 21)

Moriya was interested in observing Western design as a reference point for the improvement of Japanese design, and in selecting production and consumption practices which, adapted to a Japanese context, would aid this process. By suggesting that a comparison was possible, Moriya’s critique countered possible reactions by British readers who might assume he was in England only to learn from English furniture-making. He placed Japan on equal footing with England, supporting his claim to Japanese modernity, continuing:

It has been necessary for me to study each country’s tastes in order to find out which is the nearest to Japanese ideals, and in this way I shall gain a sure foundation to work upon in endeavouring to beautify Japanese homes. I thus do not hesitate to learn lessons from English furniture, but I do not consider it necessary to copy your Chippendale and Hepplewhite styles: neither do I intend to copy the Jacobean embellishments. What I am actually trying to discover is the spirit which underlies the best English furniture design.

(MORIYA 1921B: 21)

Echoing attitudes towards taste and national origin developed by John Ruskin and William Morris decades earlier, and present in 1920s English furniture trade discourse, this ‘spirit’ was ahistorical and transnational, a sort of immutable ‘good taste’, as well as the

6 Moriya's designs displayed a historicism that sampled 'Chinese' and 'Japanese' styles alongside English woodworking and German Expressionism as a way to express both local tradition and cosmopolitan modernity. However, he died in 1927, before arriving at a stable style. See Sarah Teasley (2003) *Furnishing the Modern Metropolitan: Moriya Nobuo's Designs for Domestic Interiors 1922–1927*, *Design Issues* 18(3): 57–71, for a discussion of national identity in the furniture of Moriya Nobuo.

product of national geography and culture. Similarly, Moriya's own self-positioning – including his use of the first-person plural – used both the specificity of being Japanese and the general authority provided by his professional knowledge to justify his right to criticize English design to his English audience, just as his invocation of shared group identity with fellow designers back home and his elite position within the design community allowed him to speak authoritatively of English design in Japan.<sup>6</sup>

According to Pratt, European narratives of travel outside Europe in the early modern period were defined first by a dualism of objective and subjective modes, then in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by a balance between scientific and Romantic ways of viewing and writing the world (PRATT 1992: 75). Moriya balanced objective accounts and self-positioning within the group with more epistolary accounts that emphasized subjective impressions and emotions, foregrounding individual subjectivity and refusing complete identification with a group. The inclusion of subjective moments indicated personal ties to the colleagues reading his missives, but also counteracted his treatment first as 'Japanese' and only then as a designer or an individual while overseas. They gesture both to Moriya's feelings of distance from the cultures enveloping him during his time overseas and to the impossibility of subjugating the self entirely to his chosen public roles.

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## CONCLUSION: TRAVEL-WRITING THE DESIGNING SELF

How did travel and travel narratives – both overseas and intrainperial – shape the modern Japanese design industry, and how did travel influence the configuration and reconfiguration of the world psychogeography of Japanese designers? On a practical level, published accounts of designers' trips shared knowledge with colleagues back home, fulfilling the mandate to contribute to the development of the industry implicit in state sponsorship for overseas travel. Whether published synchronously like Moriya's missives or years later, like Kogure's autobiography, accounts of experiences outside the geographic and cultural norm also strengthened their authors' self-identifications with a specific group. Travel accounts like those of Kogure that privileged Tokyo as a cosmopolitan centre likewise inscribed other areas as 'peripheral' and disavowed the possibility of personal contact with colonial subjects. They aided in the formation of mental maps in which the Japanese empire radiated concentrically from Tokyo and industrial practice similarly grew from rational, scientific education. With the profession itself still inchoate, missives like Moriya's, which underlined the central nature of furniture

and interior design in Europe, were also a way to argue for the validity and importance of the discipline, and for Japan's need to adopt Western-style furnishings and interiors as part of the natural progression of modernity.

For their authors, men whose visible roles in promoting the development of the design industry led to permanent state employment in Tokyo, official travel within the Japanese empire and overseas was an order to represent the center, the nation and the design industry, but also an opportunity to experience an environment free from the behavioral expectations of the metropolis. Writing their experiences allowed them both to reposition themselves in the appropriate role by first confessing and then overwriting any digressions from that role. But while some travelers like Kogure contained themselves within 'correct' boundaries for behavior within Japan, in the colonies and overseas, others like Moriya used textual representation to acknowledge – and thus to contain – the impossibility of performing that role perfectly by allowing traces of subjective experience to interfere in the story. If travel writing is a process of translating experience into words and ordering newly acquired experiential knowledge of the world for transmission to readers back home, then it is also a way of writing the self into one's spatial understanding of the world, a world dominated in the early twentieth century by the nation, and into history. The men who represented themselves as furniture and interior design professionals during this time were thus fabricating that identity through its very performance. At the same time, they were carving out social, economic and political spaces for their profession. For Japanese designers in the early twentieth century, travel writing both aided them in establishing design as a discipline and allowed them to establish self-identity within it.

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