

Here is the English translation of the column panels in the chapters. We hope this will help the non-Japanese speakers to understand the exhibition. Please ask staff for the handout onsite.

## Eyes on TOHOKU 1930-1945

Saturday, July 23 - Sunday, September 25, 2022

### Column for Chapter 1

#### Guide, Katsuhira Tokushi (案内人・勝平得之)

During the trip in Tohoku, Bruno Taut's unforgettable guide was the Akita-based printmaker Katsuhira Tokushi. Their relationship is detailed in Taut's diary and in Katsuhira's account of *Mr. Taut in Akita* [I\_37].

Taut and his friend Ueno Isaburo arrived in Akita in May 1935. They brought a letter of introduction from the Governor of Gunma Prefecture to the Governor of Akita Prefecture, but were at a loss as they were turned away at the door by the officials. In the corridor of the inn where they stayed, there was a print by Katsuhira. Ueno, remembering seeing it in a print shop in Tokyo, asked the innkeeper to deliver a letter to him. Katsuhira was confused by the letter from a stranger, but was moved by the words "I saw your work in Tokyo". The next day he went to visit the inn where Ueno and Taut were waiting.

Katsuhira Tokushi was born in a family that traded *washi* paper and later became a printmaker using *washi*. His creative impetus came from the farmers' art movement proposed by Yamamoto Kanae in 1919 and his participation in a doll-making workshop held by Kimura Goro in Oyu, Akita Pref. in 1928. While his printmaking had finally got off the ground, he was also producing local folk dolls called 'Katsuhira dolls' [I\_28]. Taut highly regarded Katsuhira as a printmaker who was developing a fresh style, and requested his prints for the frontispiece of his book. Katsuhira became to be recognized as representative of Akita-based artist and later visited by the painter Fujita Tsuguharu and the designer Charlotte Perriand.

Katsuhira was an artist who could only create what he saw with his own eyes. Taut also relied on his own eyes for architecture and critical writing. Taut's trip to Akita was deeply memorable because both the artists felt the moment when they understood each other, even if they do not speak the same language. After Taut left Japan, Katsuhira received a copy of Taut's book, *Houses and People of Japan* [I\_35]. It contained the message: "In this book, we shall tour the world together".

### Column for Chapter 1

#### Bruno Taut and Crafts (タウトと工芸)

In November 1933, Taut arrived in Sendai as a contractor for *Kogeishidosho* (Industrial Art Institute). He was asked by Kunii Kitaro, the director of the institute, to take on the role of reorganising the institute after he criticised an exhibition of prototypes he had seen in Tokyo as an imitation of Western design. Taut's requirements for the institute were to make standard prototypes for industrial mass production, to change the attitude of making '*ikamono*' (a translation of the German word '*kitsch*', meaning low quality) to suit foreign tastes and to consider what good quality, and to select the right materials and techniques for this purpose. Kenmochi Isamu and Toyoguchi Katsuhira who had just joined the institute, attempted to create standard prototypes such as lamps, chairs and door handles [I\_46-49]. However, Taut left Sendai after only four months due to his frustration towards the attitude that still led them to produce *ikamono*. The chance for Taut's hard work to be rewarded soon arrived.

He was given another opportunity to teach crafts at the workshop of Takasaki businessman Inoue Fusaichiro. Taut's products, made from materials and handcrafted with care, sold well at the workshop's store, although it's high price. Later, Taut became involved with the Gunma Prefectural Crafts Center, where he was joined by his old acquaintance, the architect Ueno Isaburo, and his wife Lizzi, but after Taut left in October 1936 and Ueno in 1939, the craft center rapidly lost its cohesive power and Taut's designs were completely forgotten.

In view of Taut's spectacular achievements as an architect in Germany, it may be somewhat unfortunate that the place where he was needed in Japan was in crafts, and for Taut himself might have categorised it as an avocation in a foreign country. However, Taut's crafts are imbued with the beauty, skill and attention to materials that he found in Japan. This should be recognised as part of Taut's design legacy.

## Column for Chapter 2

### Promoting Japanese Culture and *Mingei* (Folk Art) (対外宣伝と民藝)

The *Nihon Kobo*, run by Natori Yonosuke, is known as one of the leading press photography and design workshops of the pre-war period. From October 1934, the Japanese culture promoting magazine *NIPPON* was published with texts in English, German, French and Spanish. The magazine's designers included Yamana Ayao and Kono Takashi, and Natori as a photographer, Domon Ken and Mori Takayuki participated in its publication, which was of a high standard on a par with magazines in Europe and the USA. From 1935, the International Cultural Promotion Committee, an organisation affiliated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, began to provide assistance, spurring the active introduction of Japanese culture. Having studied design and press photography know-how in Germany, Natori was able to capture Japanese culture through the eyes of a foreigner. As a contract photographer for Ullstein's *Berliner Illustrated Newspaper*, which was said to have the world's largest circulation, his introductions of Japan included '*Ryokan* (Japanese Inn)' and '*Hanashika* (professional comic storyteller)', demonstrating in a practical way the essentials of news photography - what to write about and how to take photographs for it.

*NIPPON* focused on showcasing both the excellence of Japanese industrial technology and traditional culture. The trade fair 'Japanese Everyday Utensils' (February 1938, [II\_63]), produced by Natori, was almost equal to *Mingei* (folk art) and showed that *mingei* could also stand up only with its figurative aspects in the context of modernism. Modernism of the 1930s 'discovered' different cultures and classics and sublimated these into modernist forms, and *mingei* also has a remarkable affinity with modern design. Natori-*Nihon Kobo*, which led international visual culture with its excellent photography and layout structure, and Yanagi Soetsu, who found beauty in hand-crafted artisan work, had a common interest and sympathy for aesthetic values, which led to the appearance of articles related to folk art in the same magazine.

After the outbreak of the Pacific War, *NIPPON* was downsized for the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Area and transformed from a news magazine into a propaganda magazine. 'Civilian Life in Wartime', *NIPPON*, No. 33 (II\_66), which introduces the Yanagi family and the Japan Folk Crafts Museum, shows Sori before his call to duty and captures his brief period of peaceful moment.

## Column for Chapter 2

### *Mingei* Supporter in Tohoku (東北の民藝支援者)

In Yanagi Soetsu's folk art research and collection activities, the Tohoku region has been blessed with a large number of deliverables as well as supporters. Okawa Ryo, who had been independently trying to preserve and utilise handicrafts of Daikoji village (now Hirakawa City) in Aomori Pref., was attracted to the beauty of the patterns on the '*kogin* (type of stitch design)' and '*date-gera*' (locally called '*ori-*

*gera'*, meaning *mino* or raincoat) traditionally made in the local Minamitsugaru's farming community, and had been collecting them since the end of the Meiji era. In 1915, he founded the *Nokan* Craft Institute. He designed household items applying pattern-making techniques and materials and had them made as a side job for farmers.

Oikawa Zenzo, from Junikabura Village (now Hanamaki City) in Iwate Pref., was encouraged by Yanagi to pursue a career in dyeing and weaving, and began efforts to introduce herb dyeing and new designs to improve homespun products in his home town. In *Kamisukimura-tabinikki* [II\_68], *mingei* coterie member Jugaku Bunsho, who surveyed handmade washi paper production areas throughout Japan from 1937, praised Oikawa's work, which continued to be produced using carefully selected materials, while many production areas were forced to decline during the war. Kikkawa Yasumasa, who worked at the Iwate Prefectural Industrial Research Institute, teaching and encouraging *Nambutekki* ironware and side-line products, became committed to *mingei* (folk art) movement. This was because he learnt from Yanagi and Taut's attitude who came to the prefecture in early 1934 and found beauty in the local culture. During a survey of folk art in 1938, the group saw a young woman in local farmer's clothes in Omyoujinmura (now Shizukuishicho), which Kikkawa particularly liked and often drew [II\_67]. Also Yanagi and Kon Wajiro, who participated in the survey, were highly interested in the unique customs of the area.

Other Tohoku artists include Koigawa Junjiro from Hachinohe in Aomori Pref., who introduced the '*hishi-zashi*' (stitch work) and *ema* (votive picture plaque) from the Nanbu region, and Tomiki Tomoji, who devoted himself to the revival of *kabazaiku* (cherry bark ware) in Kakunodate in Akita Pref. Okawa and other supporters of the *Mingei* movement share a fascination with the beauty nurtured in the humble lives of Tohoku rural area. It must have been a great pleasure for them to have the value of their modest beauty recognised by Yanagi, who had seen the works from all over the country.

### Column for Chapter 3

#### Trends and Distribution of the Toy Hobby (玩具趣味の流行と流通)

The toy hobby, which began in the Meiji era, is regarded as one of the old-fashioned movements retracing the Edo era. The *Shukokai*, a well-known association of hobbyists, is a prime example of this, and the association grew considerably with the addition of toy enthusiasts such as Shimizu Seifu, who published the magazine *Unai no Tomo*, to a group of archaeologist Tsuboi Shogoro and others. In the Taisho era, *Kokeshi-kai* were established in Kansai (west Japan) and Tohoku, spreading the enthusiasm for toys throughout the country.

One of the most influential folk toy shops was Gohachi, which opened in Ginza, Tokyo in 1937. Yamanouchi Kinzaburo, the owner of Gohachi, was a multi-faceted figure: a Japanese-style painter, magazine journalist, small art shop owner and printmaker. He worked with his former colleague at *Shufu-no-Tomo-Sha*, Imamura Hidetaro, and dealt items that seemed to border on art and hobby. In 1914, Yamanouchi published *Joujou* as a collection of foreign toys, which are loaned to him by his friends, in *Unai no Tomo*. He did not deepen ideologically or theorise about the enjoyment of toys.

In 1937, the pamphlet *Collection* [III\_46] was published with the opening of the second Gohachi. The pre-war edition of 64 issues was published on medium-format *washi* paper from Aizu, Fukushima Pref., folded into quarters and interspersed with art paper for covers and photos. It was elaborate, using a combination of letterpress, collotype, reticule and multi-coloured woodblock printing, but as it was a thin pamphlet, libraries rarely have in their collections.

This technique of folding *washi* paper into quarters as a pamphlet was also applied to *Kokeshi* (Tokyo *Kokeshi* Society Bulletin, [III\_52]) and *Kokeshi Dayori* (Kansai), indicating that Gohachi was highly influential although its size. The shop was temporarily closed in 1944 due to the escalation of the war, and in 1958, Imamura became the owner and opened the third Gohachi in Yurakucho, Tokyo. It was a famous shop which sponsored Takei Takeo, Kawakami Sumio and Serizawa Keisuke.

### Column for Chapter 3

#### The Travel Boom and Gaze Toward the Rural Region (旅行ブームと地方へのまなざし)

In 1927, folklorist Yanagida Kunio, defined '*tabi* (journey)' as '*ui mono tsurai mono* (painful things)', while '*ryoko* (traveling)' as 'enjoyment' and 'new culture', in his lecture 'Progress and Retrogress in Traveling'. This episode shows how travel as a leisure pursuit was expanding and spreading from the end of the Taisho era to the early Showa era. For the travel boom to expand, a number of conditions need to be met. These include the development and expansion of transport networks, the rise of a middle class, including office workers who enjoy their leisure time, the improvement and enhancement of tourist attractions and accommodation facilities, the development of media to encourage travel, the diversification of hobbies and other networks, and the financial freedom of travellers. The start of national parks in 1934 also triggered interest in rural areas. Furthermore, in 1930, the Board of Tourist Industry was established as a foreign bureau in the Ministry of Railways, and the publication of a travel magazine for foreigners, as well as the effect of the weak yen, led to a rapid increase in foreign visitors around 1935-36. Customers gradually moved from nearby day trips to remote areas with overnight stays, and hot springs destinations were linked by buses from railway stations.

The '*Kokeshi* Tour' to Tohoku, organised by the Tokyo *Kokeshi* Association shortly after its foundation in 1939, was a three-day trip to the *kokeshi* production areas of Tsuchiyu (Fukushima Pref.) and Toogatta (Miyagi Pref.) to meet creators, at a cost of approximately 20 yen. This tour was made possible by the fact that several express trains operated between main stations by steam locomotive. There were four participants in the tour. It is stated that the participants returned with great satisfaction, but on the other hand, due to miscommunication, the *kokeshi* creators were not present at Tsuchiyu, and a report like a penitential letter is written in *Kokeshi*, no.1.

After the passing of the National Mobilisation Law in 1940, official slogans such as 'No unnecessary travel' and 'Luxury is the enemy' were announced, and the railways were regarded as a means of transporting wartime supplies and evacuated children.

### Column for Chapter 4

#### Charlotte Perriand, Contacts with Japan (シャルロット・ペリアン、東北・日本との接触)

Charlotte Perriand first came to Japan in August 1940 at the invitation of the Japanese Ministry of Commerce and Industry as an advisor on export art and crafts. Early on her arrival, she was guided by Yanagi Sori and Sakakura Junzo to the Japan Folk Crafts Museum, Katsura Rikyu and shops selling materials such as bamboo and *washi* paper. She also met a succession of key figures in the *Mingei* (folk art) movement, such as Yanagi Soetsu, Kawai Kanjiro and Hamada Shoji, to gain an understanding of the current state of Japanese culture, architecture and crafts. In November, after a two-week research trip to Tohoku including Sendai, Shinjo, Sakata and Tsuruoka, she worked with craftsmen in Tokyo to produce her signature "Chaise Longue", a steel reclining chair, using bamboo as a substitute. The production of the bed pad [IV\_22] to be placed on the chaise longue was left to the experience and imagination of the craftsmen of the *Setcho* (explained in the next column) in Shinjo (Yamagata Pref.), and the result was a bed pad made of straw, similar to the weave of the back of a straw raincoat. The foldable chaise longue [IV\_24], also made by Shinjo's *Setcho*, consisted of thick, three-folded cushions laid on a wooden base of simple construction. Perriand proposed cushions made of *kayakusa* (made by *Setcho* in Shinjo) and cypress bark weaving (thinly shaved and woven cypress bark; made by Tatsumura Bijutsuorimono in Kyoto). She tried to show the regional characters of Japan and the range of handicrafts.

Perriand's results in Japan was presented as the exhibition called "Selection / Tradition / Creation" held at the Takashimaya Department Store in Tokyo in March 1941. The exhibition was a lifestyle-tailored venue, with a 'selection' of existing crafts that could also be used in the West, a reaffirmation of 'tradition' that has not lost its ancient Japanese purity, and a proposal for new 'creations', such as

foldable chaise longue. Perriand herself positioned the exhibition as 'my first research in Japan, and only a starting point', but it was also passed on to the post-war designers, led by Yanagi Sori and others.

#### Column for Chapter 4

##### Setcho and Kon Wajiro (雪調と今和次郎)

Research Institute of Agrarian Economy in Snowbound District (*Setcho*) was established in 1933 in Shinjo, Yamagata Pref., as an agency of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The first director, Yamaguchi Hiromichi, played a leading role in three projects: research and education on agricultural economics; development and education on rural industry and secondary industries; and research and improvement proposals for farmhouses in snow-covered regions. It was a continuation of the policy of the Agricultural and Rural Economic Rehabilitation Plan, which developed homespun, processed food and crafts as advanced local industry promotion. Yamaguchi was active in cultural activities and worked with the *Mingei* movement and the Industrial Art Institute, invited Yanagi Soetsu and Charlotte Perriand to teach at the Institute. The 1939 production of *Snow Country*, considered a masterpiece of Japanese documentary film by Ishimoto Tokichi was filmed in Shinjo.

Kon Wajiro participated in a survey of farmhouses in Sakegawa Village in 1934 and made design proposals for rural house improvement and cooperative workshops. Also he drew up drawings for the construction of an experimental farmhouse built in 1938 (not extant), and for the construction of onsite Communal Storage House in various locations. The experimental farmhouse was a three-storey wooden house with a natural snow fall and had an entrance on the second floor. Like the design of architecture which he planned for Hani Motoko's Tohoku Settlement Project, it inherits and reflects the Arts and Crafts style.

In addition to the Snow Research Institute, in 1934, the Silk Experiment Station in Shinjo of the former Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry was built for research into the promotion of sericulture in the Tohoku region and for experiments in genetic modification of fruit trees. The development of agricultural chemistry and technology also took place there. The people of Shinjo at the time welcomed agricultural bureaucrats posted from Tokyo and cultural figures such as Yamaguchi, Kon, Yanagi and Perriand to help with their cutting-edge activities, but it is sceptical that this actually enriched people's lives there. One of the reasons for the failure of the experimental farmhouses was that it interfered with the relationships between the families who moved in and the local people. Wajiro seems to have learnt from his experience in *Setcho* that local development requires improvements that incorporate suggestions and lifestyles made by the local people themselves.

#### Column for Chapter 5

##### Kon Junzo and Aomori (今純三と青森)

Kon Junzo was 30 years old and making a living as a designer in Tokyo when the Great Kanto Earthquake struck. The event led his elder brother Wajiro to persuade Junzo to return to Aomori. Junzo remained in Aomori for the next 16 years, supporting local artistic activities and developed his *Kogengaku* (modernology) methods to produce unique depictions of local folklore and life scenes. Junzo also worked on projects to promote local crafts and participated in the *Rokka-kai*, an association of artists founded by Okawa Ryo, who supported Yanagi Soetsu, to foster young people in the region. Junzo's illustrations and essays published in *Minzoku Geijutsu (Folk Art)*, vol.1, no.11 [V\_33], were considered to be expressions made possible by his ability to combine that of a painter and a folklorist, and proved that *Kogengaku* is an effective way for young people in rural areas to face and nurture their local communities. Researcher Tsushima Emiko points out that this led to the later emphasis on optative expression in *Minzoku Geijutsu*, that Junzo himself had a sense of mission to record local customs, and that Wajiro was pleased with Junzo's achievements, as he highly valued his *Aomoriken Gafu (Picture Book of Aomori Prefecture)* [V\_57-64].

In *Aomoriken Gafu*, Junzo has a completeness as an artwork that is lacking in Wajiro's *kogengaku*, which attempted to record the changes of the city. There seems to be more than just detailed drawing, but a unique expression of the snow country which was only made possible by Junzo's thoughts and the line drawing of the etching. Junzo's snow depicts the tactile characteristics of the subject through a delicate composition of lines. He also depicts the accumulated snow not as a mere white mass, but with contour lines and textures expressed by a variety of lines. Junzo's results as an artist easily overcomes the boundary between social awareness and art, something Wajiro was unable to do, and has left an irreplaceable and solid mark on Japanese art history.