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Soundings

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Treasures: 5,000 Years of Japanese Art

By Ann Chou, CC '13

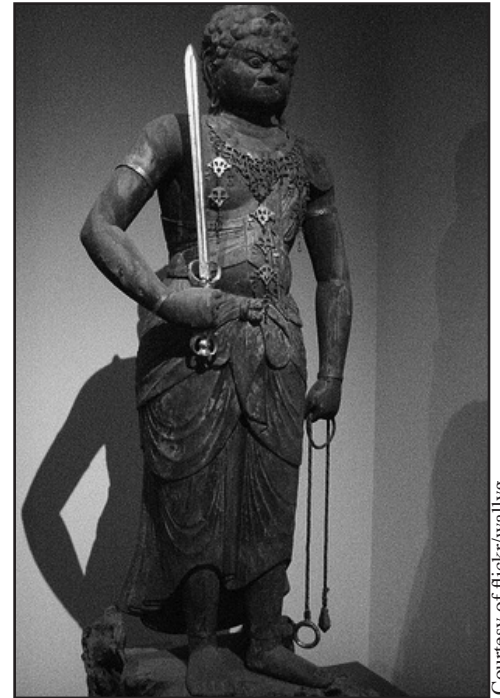
The entrance of the Sackler Wing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art is perhaps designed to invoke nervous respect. The visitor enters under the glower of grim statues who stood sentinel at temples in their past lives. But any initial apprehension quickly evaporates when you realize that the most ominous and fearsome statue in the room is actually the compassionate god, Fudo Myo-o. And the final statues in the room, two lithe bodhisattvas, arouse more of an electrifying than fearful awe. As early examples of "Tenpy Sculpture," a movement concerned with natural representation, these sculptures display fluid-like garments that suggest a life of their own. The rest of the special

exhibit—"Treasures from the Packard Collection: 5,000 years of Japanese Art"—only inspires further pleasure.

The exhibit opened on December 17, 2009 to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Met's acquisition of the Packard Collection. Organized by Sinead Kehoe, Joyce Denney, and Masako Watanabe, the installation showcases artwork spanning over 5,000 years and includes some of the Asian Art Department's finest works, such as Kano Sansetsu's Old Plum and his son Kano Eino's screen painting, One Hundred Boys, which is making its public debut with this exhibit.

These works and more were selected from the greater collection, acquired in 1975, of 412 works that date back to the ninth century. Costing \$5.1 million, the

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Courtesy of flickr/wallyg

One of the Five Wisdom Kings, Fudo Myo-o is filled with wrath against evil. The Fudo Myo-o statue is on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

About the Weatherhead East Asian Institute:



Since its establishment in 1949, Columbia University's Weatherhead East Asian Institute has been a major center for research, teaching, and publishing on modern and contemporary Asia. The Institute's mission is to train new generations of experts in the humanities, social sciences, and the professions and to enhance understanding of East Asia in the wider community.

US and Japan Celebrate 50th Anniversary of Security Pact Amidst Tension

By Katy Marshall, CC '12

January 19, 2010 was decidedly a day of mixed emotions both for Columbia students reluctantly heading back to class after winter break as well as for Japan and the United States, as the two nations marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security. The agreement, signed on January 19, 1960 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower and Prime Minister Nobusuke Kishi, replaced the initial agreement signed in 1951 upon termination of official US occupation and was designed to be the framework for a diplomatic, economic and military relationship between

the two nations for decades to come. The historic victory of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) last August, as well as the tension building between the two nations over issues like the rise of China, the global economy, and the future of the US military presence in Japan, present crucial tests of this storied alliance.

Although the treaty has fundamentally shaped the US-Japan relationship and Asian geopolitics over the past half-century, it was ratified amidst massive and even violent protests. Demonstrations took place in Tokyo for months and caused President Eisenhower to cancel a trip to Japan due to security concerns; perhaps not

surprisingly, Prime Minister Kishi's unflinching support for the treaty ultimately precipitated his resignation. Even the nature of the Japanese ratification—it was enacted after the Upper House of the Diet failed to vote on it for thirty days—evoked the widespread dissent and reluctance that accompanied the treaty.

The agreement's most significant, as well as controversial, components remain Articles V and VI. The former recognizes that both nations must take action against "an armed attack against either [Japan or the US]" in Japanese territory, with the understanding that Article

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Treasures: 5,000 Years of Japanese Art



Courtesy of Peter Roan

Kano Sansetsu's *Old Plum* is from the Edo period of Japanese history, circa 1645. This piece is made up of four sliding door panels (called fusuma) and is created with ink, color and gold leaf on paper. Originally created for a temple in Kyoto, this work is unsigned but bears resemblance to signature works by Kano Sansetsu.



Courtesy of flickr/wallyg

Pictured here is Isamu Noguchi's *Water Stone* piece, on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Noguchi's career, which spanned six decades, revolved around stone sculpture and landscape design. His work is dispersed around the world and is also on display at The Noguchi Museum in Queens, New York.

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acquisition came at a hefty price but was successful in “instantly [transforming] the Museum into an institution boasting one of the finest collections of its kind in the West, with encyclopedic holdings from the

Neolithic period through the nineteenth century,” as asserted by the exhibition's website. The Metropolitan Museum currently boasts a world-class collection of Momoyama and Edo screen paintings, Heian and Kamakura sculptures, Buddhist scrolls, and ceramics.

The original owner of the artwork and the man behind the collection's name—Harry Packard—was an enthusiastic collector of Japanese and Korean art. An American born in 1914, Packard first became acquainted with the arts of Japan at the Metropolitan Museum of Art during World War II. Soon after, he began collecting art while repatriating Japanese prisoners in China. He lived in Japan from the 1950's until his death in 1991. In 1975, he sold his formidable collection to the Met for less than half of its estimated \$11.3 million value.

The size and value of the Packard Collection is as remarkable as the range of the art in it. The exhibit is filled with the meticulous detail, brilliant coloring, delicate mountains, birds, grottos, waterfalls, floral motifs and propitious symbols typical of traditional Japanese art. Fans of the riverside-pavilion-beside-distant-pines-on-misty-mountain convention in *suibokuga* (ink paintings) will not be disappointed. But Japanese art is also unique in that it is characterized by opposing aesthetics; much of the works are as exuberant or violent as others are refined. Bright, busy panoramic scenes of life, such as Kano Eino's huge painting of a hundred boys hang alongside

wispy landscapes of the natural world.

And halfway through the exhibit, you will come upon a delightfully tranquil space. Soft, natural light from the skylights fall onto Isamu Noguchi's *Water Stone*, which is a large brown rock fountain sitting atop a floor of speckled stones. Water flows up from the ground through a pump into the basin, which it fills before cascading almost imperceptibly over the edge to sink into the stones. The musical tinkling of water fills the space that feels much, much larger than its modest size. The sculpture and its room set viewers in a meditative mood that complements the exhibit perfectly. The subdued golden lights, soft carpets, and dark wooden walls of the Met's Sackler Wing lends itself to gratified contemplation—something of which Harry Packard's collection is well worthy.

“Treasures from the Packard Collection: 5,000 Years of Japanese Art” is supplemented with programs such as regular gallery talks and four free “Sunday at the Met” lectures: “Kano Sansetsu’s Strange Trees: Eccentricity or Enlightenment?”, “Who Was Harry Packard?”, “Harry Packard’s Japanese Pots”, and “Layered Meanings: Rai San’yo’s Poem about Gion Nankai’s Ink Bamboo on Robe” to be held on April 18. The exhibit will be on view at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Fifth Avenue & 82nd Street) until June 6, 2010. Admission is free for Columbia University students.

Menkui Tei: For Authentic Japanese Ramen

By Angela Lu, CC' 10

Located on 56th Street, close to 6th Ave, Menkui Tei is somewhat of an underrated, hole-in-the-wall place. The restaurant is a small space, long and narrow, with simple walls and lighting. However, its authentic Japanese cuisine more than compensates for its mediocre ambience.

Although Menkui Tei serves a variety of traditional foods of Japan, most people come to the restaurant for its ramen. Each dish of ramen comes with a special broth

concocted by Menkui Tei cooks, and its signature broth is one made from boiling pork bone. This broth comes with the Tonkotsu Ramen dish, which has a light yet savory flavor and plenty of noodles to satisfy big appetites. The ramen comes with two pieces of roast pork and a good portion of bean sprouts, which give the dish a nice crunch. In addition to Tonkotsu, other ramen options come with broths made from soy sauce, miso, and spicy ground meat. All the ramen dishes are about \$8.00.

Along with ramen, Menkui Tei

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Photo by Angela Lu

A bowl of authentic Japanese ramen at Menkui Tei runs about \$8.00.

US and Japan Celebrate 50th Anniversary of Security Pact Amidst Tension

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IX of the Constitution of Japan prohibits the nation from taking part in such defense. In exchange for America's assured defense of the Japanese homeland, Article VI enables American forces to use Japanese facilities and land "for the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East." The underlying structure of the alliance as one forged by a former occupying power with the nascent, CIA-backed government of the Liberal Democratic Party, in addition to the perceived inequality of the exchange of American defense for Japanese funding, territory and other resources, has long solicited criticism about the "asymmetrical" nature of the treaty.

Nevertheless, the bilateral pact was and arguably remains, one of the most successful alliances of the modern era. Japan's economic growth under the Yoshida Doctrine was possible largely due to American military protection, and the West was able to use Japan as a bulwark against the threat of Communist neighbors. Two decades after the fall of the Soviet Union, North Korea remains

a clearly defined motivation for both nations to remain in the treaty, and Northeast Asia, although rife with territorial disputes, remains stable. Even so, however, the security pact and its "asymmetrical" origins stand as a powerful reminder of the postwar era, as do many of its practices. The Japanese government continues to supply the hefty *omoiyari*, literally "sympathy,"

The rise of China as an economic superpower and the frustration with Western economic models has precipitated a renewed interest in pan-Asian relationships in Japanese politics.

budget used to support American forces, estimated at around 1% of GDP. American extraterritorial privilege and the rise of crime on military bases has long been a concern for many, particularly after the tragic rape of a 12-year-old Okinawan girl by a group of American marines in 1995. In this sense, the occupation, and the postwar, never truly ended. The Japanese "nation-state" as it is traditionally defined leads to a crisis of definition—it has never been a full-fledged, autonomous geopolitical entity.

The anniversary of the pact comes at a time of renewed skepticism of the scope of the agreement. The rise of China as an economic superpower and the frustration with Western economic models has precipitated a renewed interest in pan-Asian relationships in Japanese politics, as Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama controversially expressed in his New York Times editorial last

August. Since then, Hatoyama has called for a "close and equal" Japan-U.S. relationship under the security treaty irrespective of its unequal origins. However, the dispute over established plans to move the American military base Futenma in Ginowan City, Okinawa to a less populated area in the northern part of the island has placed Hatoyama in a nearly impossible position. The Prime Minister campaigned on a promise to move the base off of Okinawa, where American forces still control a sizeable

percentage of the island, or out of Japan altogether; however, Tokyo and Washington signed a treaty last year reaffirming the relocation of Futenma to Camp Schwab, another base in Nago, on the northern portion of the island. While the dispute will surely be inevitably resolved, Japanese resentment of the American military and economic presence appears to be growing as the country's search to define its national identity has undeniably been revived over the past year.

In a recent Japan Times article, University of Tokyo political scientist Fumiaki Kubo described the Hatoyama administration's relationship with the United States as "picking an unnecessary fight." While the Futenma issue will most likely result in a political and diplomatic loss for the DPJ, the end of the postwar one-party rule in Japan that Hatoyama symbolizes has created the opportune political moment for a reevaluation of the nature of the US-Japan relationship. Although it is unlikely that this administration will retain the international "political capital" necessary to have such a discussion, perhaps Japan's newfound political fluidity will allow a future leader to initiate a candid discussion of a "close and equal" future under the security agreement.

Menkui Tei: For Authentic Japanese Ramen

Photo by Angela Lu



The interior of Menkui Tei is cozy and warmly lit.

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also has a variety of appetizers. A popular one worth trying is the handmade gyoza, or fried dumplings. Unlike ones sold in the frozen section of your local supermarket, Menkui Tei gyoza

For those looking to get decent cheap eats, Menkui Tei is the place to go.

has a thin outer layer of wrapping—as to not overwhelm the ingredients inside the dumpling—and lots of juicy pork underneath. Aside from gyoza, the restaurant also serves a many variants of *onigiri*, a classic Japanese rice ball. Customers can order these rice balls with fillings such as salmon roe, cod roe, or sour plum. While the *onigiri* comes with plenty of rice and seaweed wrapping, there is an unfortunate dearth of filling, rendering the *onigiri* mildly bland and tasteless.

However, if you are looking

to try a good rice dish, Menkui Tei also serves an exceptional fried rice dish. It comes with a nicely blended mixture of eggs, shrimp, pork, scallion, and green peas. Not much oil is used, so the fried rice does not leave a greasy aftertaste. Nonetheless, the dish may have one drawback: an overwhelming portion of pickled ginger. Although the bright red color of this ginger adds much to aesthetics, its taste can be a bit too much at times, especially for those with an aversion to ginger, who may be inclined to ask for the dish without it.

For those looking to get decent cheap eats, Menkui Tei is the place to go. Beyond its value, the restaurant also has great service; even during peak lunch hours, you can expect to get your food within 10 minutes of ordering. There is a bar-like seating area with a full view of the kitchen, so for those curious as to how authentic Japanese ramen is made, you have a chance to find out.

Menkui Tei
60 W 56th St
(Btwn 5th & 6th Ave)
New York, NY 10019

Upcoming Events at the Weatherhead East Asian Institute

MONDAY, MARCH 1

LECTURE: “US-Japan Relations in East Asia and Beyond”

Kouji Murata, Professor, Doshisha University

Christina Davis, Associate Professor, Princeton University

Ryo Sahashi, Assistant Professor, Tokyo University

Devin Stewart, Director of Global Policy Initiatives,

Carnegie Council

4:00 PM - 5:30 PM

918 IAB

Co-sponsored by the Consulate General of Japan in New York

TUESDAY, MARCH 2

COLLOQUIUM: Chinese Law and Society

“Speaking Law to Political Economic Power:

China’s Derivative Lawsuit Mechanism

and the Limits of Private Law”

Nicholas C. Howson, Assistant Professor of Law,

University of Michigan Law School

4:20 PM - 6:10 PM

Jerome Greene Hall, Case Lounge (Room 701)

Co-sponsored by Center for Chinese Legal Studies

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 3

East Asia Senior Thesis Roundtable Discussion

5:00 PM - 6:30 PM

IAB 707

THURSDAY, MARCH 4

CENTER FOR KOREAN RESEARCH LECTURE:

“Shamans Nostalgias and the IMF -

South Korean Popular Religion in Motion”

Laurel Kendall, Adjunct Professor of Anthropology,

Columbia University and Curator of Asian Ethnographic

Collections, American Museum of Natural History

12:00 PM - 1:30 PM

IAB 918

FRIDAY, MARCH 5

The WEAI offers funding for research, language acquisition, unpaid internships, and dissertation write-up during the summer to selected Columbia students committed to professional and academic engagement with East and Southeast Asia.

Visit

(<http://www.columbia.edu/cu/weai/funding.html>)

for more information.

ABOUT SOUNDINGS



Published monthly by the Weatherhead Undergraduate Council, Soundings is edited by Ellen Liu. If you have any questions or comments, or would like to contribute, you can contact her at EL2375@columbia.edu.