

Rise and Fall of the Local Industry Caused by the Awareness of Design: Research on the Yokohama Scarf Industry from the 1950s to the 1990s

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This study addresses the design of the Yokohama scarf, which developed into a prominent local industry in the 1950s-1960s and declined in the 1990s. In view of scarf designs, it examines the cultural, political, and economic background based on the nation-state system in the post war period. Although a great deal of effort has been made on the studies of history and economy of the Yokohama scarf industry, little is focused on its design. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to research the Yokohama scarf designs, and clarifies how the manufacturer discovered higher value in the design. It is also discussed how the change in design awareness affected rise and fall of the Yokohama scarf industry.

Since the latter half of the nineteenth century, Yokohama has been a port where raw silk—a major export product during the Meiji era—was collected from Eastern Japan and shipped abroad. By using raw silk as a material, the production of scarves, originated from Western countries, started in the early 1930s, when technical innovation made it possible for them to print on a larger size of silk textile than before. Since then, after the wartime interruption, the Yokohama scarves were transported both domestically and internationally from the 1950s to the 1990s. More than 2.3 million dozen of scarves were exported from Yokohama at the peak in 1965.

The history of the Yokohama scarf industry overlaps with that of postwar Japan's reconstruction. During the postwar rehabilitation, the textile industry was once again regarded as an important export item. What became a problem again in the process was the imitation of overseas designs by Japanese manufacturers, that had already occurred before the World War II. Chapter 1 discusses that although the Yokohama Scarf Design Preservation Qualification Register started in the 1950s in order to prevent imitations of design of other countries, it became an opportunity to improve the awareness of creative design. It should be recalled that there was the tendency to regard "design" as an ideology of national revitalisation in the 1950s in Japan, and this trend also worked on the Yokohama scarf industry.

Chapter 2 observes various attempts such as competitions, trade fairs and designer

trainings to create original designs from Yokohama, and highlights the efforts so as to encourage creative designs and discourage the makers from imitating foreign designs that were not imitations of other countries.

In Yokohama, the order-based division of labor production system was seen as an issue to be overcome. However, the designs of scarves manufactured under these regimes are valuable historical resources for researchers in that they reflect the cultural, political and economic background of the era. In Chapter 3, the design of Yokohama scarves, their trends, and the target market are analysed by making reference to the scarves registered and preserved by Japan Export Scarf Manufacture Cooperative and the Japan Patent Office. As a result, it was confirmed that various scarves such as floral patterns, geometric patterns, souvenirs, commemorative items, and scarves for advertisements were distributed in the world market.

Chapter 4 discusses how “Japan” is represented in the exported scarves in the 1950s and 1960s. Creative designs with typical Japanese characteristics were found in exported scarves. Based on the discussion of revival or creation of tradition in circles of art, design, and architecture in the 1950s, it is argued that how “tradition” was extracted from the “Japanese Modern” design in architecture, art, and furniture so as to be compatible with the scarf designs.

Chapter 5 points out that the British trading company “the United Africa Company” (UAC) was involved in the Yokohama scarf exported to Africa, and Yokohama played a role between the UK and the Commonwealth of Nations. The “tradition” of Africa was discovered by the suzerains. The coexistence of the suzerains and colonies was visualised in scarves during the African independence movement in the late 1950s. After independence of the African countries, the modern Western system such as education, politics, and consumer activities were renewed in Africa. This paper analyses the fact that the modern Western system was diverted to the construction of the nation visualised in the design of the Yokohama scarf for Africa. The design of the Yokohama scarf witnesses the process how the newly independent countries visualized their identities by modifying vocabulary of images invented by the European countries.

Chapters 1 to 5 demonstrate that the awareness of design supremacy nurtured in the process of pursuing affluence and efficiency brought about the prosperity of the Yokohama scarf industry. However, Chapter 6 pointed out that the awareness of design supremacy also brought the decline of the Yokohama scarf industry. Since the 1970s,

when the domestic demand for Yokohama scarves exceeded exports, manufacturers turned to the brand licensed products of scarves. This hindered the development of creating original designs from Yokohama and resulted in the decline of the Yokohama scarf industry. The brand design was selling steadily in the 1980s. The Yokohama scarf manufacturers added maximum design value to brands. The high awareness of manufacturers in design is such that the rise of brand-licensed products eventually led to the decline of the Yokohama scarf industry.

The significance of this paper is that it shows the archive of scarf designs is important not only as records of this fashion item but also as resources for us to investigate the cultural and historical background in various ways. Furthermore, this paper makes it clear that 'design-consciousness' was the key issue, or an ideology of the latter half of the twentieth century, which caused the rise and fall of the Yokohama scarf industry.