

Nanban.
Far East.
Close Art



International Conference
Warsaw
4-5 October 2019



ORGANIZER:



Conservation of the Nanban table from the Wilanów collection was possible thanks to the financial support from the Japanese Sumitomo Foundation and cooperation between the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów with outstanding experts in Asian lacquer.



The conference „Nanban. Far East. Close Art” is one of the events commemorating the 100th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Poland and Japan in 2019.



The construction of the showcase that will protect the Nanban table against changing climatic conditions and destructive light, while also allowing museum's guests to admire the work and get to know the details as closely as possible, is financed by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage's subsidy.

The international conference is crowning “The Collaborative Project of Conservation of the Nanban Table from the Collection of Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów” co-financed by the grant from the Sumitomo Foundation. The Nanban table from the Wilanów collection, made around 1610, is an object of unique artistic quality, among the finest and most important surviving examples of Nanban style in the world collections. It owes its shape to late Renaissance Portuguese furniture and its technology and decorative motifs – to the Japanese lacquerware (urushi) and Oriental tradition.

Nanban, literally the art of the “southern barbarians”, denotes Japanese work of decorative art, using urushi lacquer and reflecting a strong impact of European art and tradition. Produced between the 1540s and the 1630s, they were mostly intended for export to Europe and their characteristic feature is an extraordinary combination of Eastern and Western qualities. Japanese foreign trade of this period was dominated by Portuguese merchants; hence, numerous Nanban-type artefacts disclose strong inspiration and references to Portuguese products.

Ten years have passed since Victoria and Albert Museum's big project of conservation of Mazarin Chest. Preservation and conservation of Oriental lacquerware was and still is a challenge for specialists all over the world. Ending of the second such a broad project in Europe – conservation of the Nanban table from the Wilanów collection – is a great occasion to deepen reflection and discuss aesthetical and ethical approach, applied methods and materials in conservation of urushi.

The conference is attended by distinguished guests, authorities in the field of lacquerware: Prof. Dr Monika Kopplin (Münster, Germany), Dr Masako Shono-Sladek (Cologne, Germany) and urushi conservator Shigeru Kitamura (Nara, Japan). Museum staff and associates present details of the Nanban table conservation project. Other participants of the seminar are able to present their research and conservation projects during the poster session.

4th OCTOBER 2019

8.45 REGISTRATION

9.15 Opening speech – Paweł Jaskanis,
director of the Museum of King Jan III's Palace at Wilanów

SESSION I

9.30 Prof. Dr. Monika Kopplin
Karako – Japanese *Chinoiseries* in French lacquer furniture

10.10 Dr. Masako Shôno-Sládek
The splendour of urushi. From poetical space
to the horror vacui

10.50 Discussion

11.10 Coffee break

SESSION II

11.30 Shigeru Kitamura
Conservation and restoration of lacquerware cultural
properties in Japan. Methods of conservation of urushi
objects according to the guidelines of BUNKASAI
(Ministry of Culture and Heritage)

11.50 Karolina Alkemade
Nanban table – the highlight of Potocki family historical
collection

12.10 Anna Guzowska et al.
Technique and technology of the Nanban table

12.30 Joanna Koryciarz-Kitamikado
Conservation of the Nanban table – a short review of two-year
international project at Wilanów

- 12.50 Discussion
- 13.10 Lunch
- 14.10 **VISIT TO THE EXHIBITION**
Presentation of the Nanban table and the 18th century French desk by Jacques Dubois
- SESSION III**
- 15.30 **Elise Andersson, Jonas Veenhoven, Paul van Duin**
Material and cross-section analysis of Japanese Nanban lacquer – some case studies in search for common denominators
- 15.50 **Michał Ochremiak**
A photogrammetric documentation of the Nanban table and the 18th century French desk by Jacques Dubois
- 16.10 **Eryk Bunsch**
Possibilities in application of 2D and 3D optical measurements in documentation of the Nanban table and the 18th century French desk by Jacques Dubois
- 16.20 Discussion
- 16.40 End of the meeting
- 5th OCTOBER 2019**
- 9.30 **POSTER SESSION**
- 11.00 Coffee break
- 11.30 **GUIDED TOUR OF THE MUSEUM OF KING JAN III'S PALACE AT WILANÓW**
- 13.00 End of the conference



Karako – Japanese Chinoiseries in French lacquer furniture

A recently acquired fragment of export lacquer became the starting point of the puzzle-like reconstruction of two pairs of Japanese lacquer cabinets that had been disassembled in the 18th century and subsequently integrated into French lacquer furniture. This is undoubtedly the source of the upper side of one of these four lacquer cabinets. Despite having been trimmed all around, it is immaculately well preserved and represents Japanese export lacquer of the highest quality. The motif is executed in unusually high relief and depicts karako, i.e. “Chinese children”, who playfully assume the roles of adults and pursue the characteristic activities of scholars. The counterpart to this panel, which had apparently been taken from the same pair of cabinets, could be identified on a French lacquer *secrétaire*, attributed to the cabinetmaker Weisweiler, which is now preserved in the Eremitage. A pair of nearly identical Chinese children’s scenes in Japanese lacquer is integrated into the front side of a *secrétaire* by Garnier in the Louvre. And four of the door wings, adorned in matching style with Japanese karako, have survived on French corner cabi-

nets by Martin Carlin, which are likewise in the Louvre. All panels are not only in the same exquisite quality and styled in the same lacquer techniques, but also share the Chinese provenance of their motifs. A Japanese lacquer cabinet, which has survived as a complete piece of furniture and is preserved at Litomišl Palace in the Czech Republic, was created by the same, as-yet-unidentified lacquer workshop. Created around 1650/60, these cabinets’ *décors* continue the quality of the so-called *fine group* around the Mazarin Chest, which had been manufactured two or three decades earlier. But unlike the Mazarin Chest, and notwithstanding their Chinese theme, they represent a distinctively Japanese style. They simultaneously document the appreciation of this quality category by French collectors of the 18th century and, last but not least, the choice of the children’s scenes and their accentuated placement shows that they catered to then-current French taste for the *sujet enfantin*. Inspired by the Japanese *chinoiseries*, French copies in *vernis Martin* transformed this specific perception into French lacquer.

***The splendour of urushi.
From poetical space to the horror vacui***

Since 1959, when the Royal Lacquer Collection of Denmark was published, interest in export lacquers, especially from Japan, has greatly increased. In recent years, a surprisingly large number of examples has been introduced, their stylistic variations analyzed and their dates debated.

In this lecture, the topic will be considered from a different perspective: that of the provenance of the motifs, their varying interpretations and their European adaptations. In addition to the changes of fashion over time, one may pay attention to the quite different lifestyle and aesthetic in Japan and Europe, as well as to the differing settings in which the lacquer objects occurred in the two cultures.

In the domestic environment of Japanese high society there was little furniture, apart from shelves, chests, small desks, and writing and paper boxes. All were easily portable and were usually black lacquered and embellished with gold and silver maki-e. At the beginning of the trade with Japan, such authentic Japanese objects must have

been among the gifts of the Jesuits and the Portuguese and Spanish merchants to the Kings and Queens in Iberia.

Portraits from the late 1550s of these royals, who were the trendsetters of style, show the new fashion in black with gold and silver braiding and white ruffs. This quite new colour combination, far different from the Italian Renaissance vogue, must have been inspired by these curiosities from Japan. As early as 1564, Catherine of Austria ordered escritoirs, chests etc. These lacquerwares for European use must have been produced about 1560 at the latest.

Since the splendour of the black lacquer urushi and its exotic gold decoration fascinated the European nobles, Japanese lacquer long remained an important article of trade and developed into an unique hybrid art.

Conservation and restoration of lacquerware cultural properties in Japan. Methods of conservation of urushi objects according to the guidelines of BUNKASAI (Ministry of Culture and Heritage)

“The Collaborative Project of Conservation of the Nanban Table from the Collection of Museum of King Jan III’s Palace at Wilanów” took place in years 2017–2019. The Japanese method of conservation and restoration of lacquerware cultural properties was the basis for developing a conservation plan for this unique piece of furniture.

Protection of cultural properties in Japan started in 1897, with the law of preservation of old shrines and temples. The Cultural Property Protection Act enacted in 1950 became the base of the current cultural property protection administration. According to the law, cultural assets are defined based on their types and presented values. Those particularly important ones are designated as „important cultural properties” or „national treasures”. Their conservation management is carried out through cooperation of the owner and the Agency for Cultural Affairs, which guarantees the proper restoration by highly skilled specialists.

Conservation method depends on the purpose of repair – with or without intention of reuse. The first case applies to repair of everyday use lac-

querware or important buildings exposed to the weather where durability is required. It is often necessary to remove the degraded lacquer coating and to make new strong lacquering.

The second case applies to conservation of designated cultural assets. Its main goal is to preserve artistic, historical and technical values of the object in its present state and pass it to the future generations. The principle of „preserving the status quo” is achieved by using traditional technology and materials (natural lacquer, nikawa glue). Since they have been used for a long time in history the changes caused by time passing are well understood. Proper usage allows us to use them again in the future, since they do not disturb when new conservation is required.

However, since lacquer is the material with no reversibility, the choice of materials and techniques to suit each situation requires a good understanding and experience of lacquering techniques and their usage according to the circumstances. A few cases will be introduced in this lecture.

Nanban table – the highlight of Potocki family historical collection

Oriental art was present in the Wilanów Palace from the very beginning, with owners like Jan III or Augustus II Saxon. But it was Stanisław Kostka Potocki, keen art collector, who in the beginning of the 19th century has directed his attention to Asian art, and who decided to create a collection of Oriental art and crafts objects, with intention of sharing it with the public for the educational purposes. After Potocki's death it was his wife Aleksandra and son Aleksander who decided to continue expanding the collection as well as to arrange the apartment to accommodate it.

The southwestern corner of the apartment, the Chinese Dining Room, was where the Nanban table was being presented. It was mentioned for the first time in the inventory of 1867, what could suggest that it was bought by Stanisław Kostka Potocki's grandson, August Potocki, expanding the collection according to his grandfather's idea. Decorated densely with colourfully iridescent mother-of-pearl and gold and silver maki-e the Nanban table still is an absolute highlight of the collection.

Nowadays the Museum's collection of the Asian art consists of 505 objects, including ceramics, lacquerware, sculptures, paintings, prints, enamels, ivory carvings and textiles with total number of 83 exhibits of Japanese origin. It is currently on display in the southern wing, in the Hallway in front of the Chinese Rooms, which together with the Chinese and Hunting Rooms and the exposition of Asian art in the Open Storage Gallery makes one permanent exhibition. This is the place to show our visitors the history of the Chinese apartment and the Oriental collection itself, including pieces that need a special, dedicated space, just like the Nanban table. It is our way to bring back memory of the original idea from a great collector of the Enlightenment era.

Elise Andersson, Paweł Dąbrowski, Elżbieta Jeżewska, Henk van Keulen, Paweł Kozakiewicz, Olga Syta, Joanna Koryciarz-Kitamikado, Roman Stasiuk, Sylwia Svorová Pawełkowicz, Jonas Veenhoven, Barbara Wagner, Lei Yong

Technique and technology of the Nanban table

Knowledge about the technique and technology of artefacts is important for many reasons. It helps to understand damage processes, select the appropriate conservation and restoration work program, and often has an impact on the item's attribution. In the case of the Wilanów Nanban table, material tests were carried out throughout the entire conservation process. Only two samples were taken for cross-sections analysis, one from the table top and one from the legs, and the same for binding media and lacquer identification. Thanks to the implementation of the latest research techniques as THM-Py-GC/MS combined with AMDIS database and non-invasive procedures like UV, IR, X-ray and p-XRF examination it was possible to identify all technical and chronological layers. Microscopic observations were also very helpful.

It turned out that the table top and legs were made in a different technique, but similar technology. Two types of wood were used to make the table construction. The table top was made of one board cut out from the trunk of keya-

ki (*Zelkova serrata*) tree while the legs were carved from hinoki (*Chamaecyparis obtuse*) wood. It was also discovered that lacquer was prepared especially for export. In both cases it has a significant addition of perilla oil and other "improvers" that allowed to achieve the desired effect in a faster and cheaper way. But the compositions of individual layers from the priming to the finishing were different for two parts of the construction. Very thin plates of mother-of-pearl from abalone shell were used for raden decoration. They were inlaid before lacquering and were polished together. All metallic ornaments were made in maki-e technique and technology. Almost pure gold and silver powders were sprinkled on the pattern painted with the fresh lacquer mixed with vermilion.

The research allowed not only to identify original technique and technology of the unique piece of furniture, but also to distinguish all the additions added in the past conservations.

Conservation of the Nanban table – a short review of two-year international project at Wilanów

The Nanban table from the Wilanów Palace belongs to the most precious pieces of craft in the Museum. Made around 1610, it is an extremely rare example of Nanban lacquerware, the only known full European size table in the world collections. The table shape is typical for late Renaissance Portuguese furniture. It is densely decorated with images of plants, birds, animals and legendary beasts as well as Oriental patterns depicted in mother-of-pearl inlay and gold sprinkling technique.

The table had relatively well preserved original design but general deterioration, such as mother-of-pearl loss and lacquer layer detachment, was in progress. The lacquer surface showed signs of long exposures to sunlight and lost its original shine. The original gold decoration was worn off and painted over in many places with European varnishes. Due to high risk of further damage conservation works were urgently needed.

This project, co-financed by Sumitomo Foundation, is one of the few inter-

national collaborations involving both Japanese and European conservators, the first of this kind in Poland. The aim of conservation was to preserve the present condition of the table, following the guidelines of the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs. Japanese materials and methods were used, such as nika-wa glue for mother-of-pearl attachment (using shimbari frame) and urushi for impregnating micro-cracks and filling losses in original lacquer surface. Lost raden pieces were not compensated in order to follow the principle of “preserving the status quo” of the object.

Restoration was planned for 2 years and conducted in situ by Polish conservators with the professional supervision of Mr Shigeru Kitamura, a specialist in conservation of raden lacquerware. It took place in a special “showroom” with a glass wall, to enable the visitors to observe the work in progress.

Initial cleaning of the table and securing of loose pieces of decoration was a priority in the first year. Dirt, wax, European repainting, putty and varnish layers were removed. Loose and detached pieces of mother-of-pearl and lacquer film were attached back to its original place.

Further cleaning, filling the losses in wood and protection of raden edges continued in the second year. The lacquer surface was saturated with fresh diluted lacquer in urushigatame process. It helped to restore the table to its former splendor to a large extent.

One of the aims of this program was to exchange experience and to spread knowledge about Japanese approach to conservation through direct practical cooperation of specialists from both countries. The formula of the project proved to be successful. Supervision and guidance of Mr Kitamura has been inevitable and the Museum staff and all cooperative conservators helped to go through the conservation process smoothly.

Material and cross-section analysis of Japanese Nanban lacquer – some case studies in search for common denominators

This investigation of a small Nanban coffer in the collection of the Koninklijk Oudheidkundig Genootschap (The Royal Antiquarian Society of the Netherlands), in the care of the Rijksmuseum, was first started during the Getty workshop Recent Advances in the Characterization of Asian Lacquers (RADICAL), held in the Amsterdam Ateliergebouw in May 2017.

The lacquer decoration has typical Nanban designs with gold lines and abalone shell inlays, in combination with Japanese family crests and European silver mounts. The style suggests a Japanese origin from the early 17th century. It is, however, difficult to determine the origin of Nanban lacquer solely based on style. Do the decoration techniques, lacquer stratigraphy and material composition support this origin and date of production?

Decoration techniques were studied with a Hirox microscope. Following microscopy and histochemical staining of the cross-section, micro-excavation was performed to analyse organic material of each individual layer with

THM-Py-GC/MS. For inorganic materials, XRF and SEM were conducted. The coffer's construction was revealed with X-ray.

The stratigraphy is similar to that of two other 'Japanese' Nanban objects analysed within the RADICAL workshop series. There are also agreements concerning the use of materials. Lacquer from both *T. vernicifluum* and *G. usitata* was identified. An interesting finding is a possible marker for tofu in the ground layer.

The results of the various analyses support a Japanese origin. Investigations of the similarities and differences to Nanban objects, produced both in Japan and in other parts of Asia, are important to better understand the multiple origins of Nanban lacquer.

Possibilities in application of 2D and 3D optical measurements in documentation of the Nanban table and the 18th century French desk by Jacques Dubois

When we are dealing with such special objects as the Nanban table or a desk from the Dubois workshop it is our duty to create the best possible documentation. On the other hand, we are well aware that a perfect method of documentation doesn't exist. In search of a solution to that problem over the last three years we have combined different optical measurement techniques to optimize the use of existing hardware and software tools. Scanning the entire surface of these two objects in a really high resolution would be too complicated and time consuming, so we decided to make a three dimensional measurements of just a few chosen areas but with a use of a structural light scanning technology with extremely high sampling density of 2500 points per sq mm. Using this technique we were able to capture the true shape of these surfaces with all their imperfections and cracks. In order to reveal the delicate structure of the surfaces we have used a RTI (Reflectance Transformation Imaging) documentation, also only for a few chosen areas (about 15 cm × 15 cm each). This technique offered a great possibility

to register the appearance of an object's surface under different lighting conditions. RTI, being not a 3D, but a two-dimensional documenting technique, is much easier to operate by the end users and doesn't generate as much digital data. This method is also faster to implement, which allowed us to create a large number of measurements ahead of the conservation process and also repeat them in the same places when the conservation work was done. The benefits of using digital documentation on heritage objects across all areas of a museum's activity cannot be overestimated. It is also crucial to understand how to leverage each of the different available technologies, between photographic documentation and digital techniques such as gigapixel documentation, RTI and three-dimensional documentation. We believe that the choices we have made allowed us to create a versatile documentation process and at the same time will help to reveal to the public eye the true nature of these two beautiful objects.

Conservation of the Nanban coffer from Chirk Castle, Wales

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***“Birdcage Vase” from the Dresden Porcelain Collection
as an example of Japanese conservation techniques***

Magdalena Kozar, DRESDEN PORCELAIN COLLECTION,
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***Flora Japonica. Botanical characteristics and symbolism
of plants in Nanban table decorations from the Wilanów collection***

Dr. Eng. Jacek Kuśmierski*, MUSEUM OF KING JAN III'S
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Damian Makowski, MUSEUM OF KING JAN III'S PALACE
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***The PHySICAL project: Research protocol applied on a Japanese
Buddha statue***

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The Nanban Cabinet of the Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien.

Analyses, conservation and restoration

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Mexican Colonial enconchados and the circulation of Nanban lacquer in Spanish America

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An investigation of the use of Er:YAG laser on red lacquerware

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Case of studies: conservation/restoration of a Chinese export tea caddy

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Changes in Western conservation and the Japanese reflection

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Filling lacunae: a possible approach to the conservation of an Oriental lacquer

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One hundred years of urushi at Barcelona

ASSOCIACIÓ CULTURAL PEL CONEIXEMENT DE L'ART DE LA LACA,
Spain, <http://artdelalaca.com/info>

URUSHI BARCELONA, Spain, <http://www.urushibarcelona.com>

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Lei Yong, THE PALACE MUSEUM, Beijing, China



When Jan Sobieski accepted the royal title in 1676 and took the throne as King Jan III, he wanted to create a summer residence, close to the capital city of Warsaw but in the countryside that would give him the opportunity to enjoy peace and contact with nature. The Wilanów palace together with the picturesque garden and park form a popular baroque type of regular, axial structure situated between the representative honorary courtyard and the garden (the so-called *entre cour et jardin*).

During more than 300 years of the history of the Wilanów palace, its successive owners extended the residence and introduced changes to it in accordance with the prevailing fashions. Despite this, the palace has retained its original character, reflecting the still vivid memory of its first owner, King Jan III.

The museum at the Wilanów palace was established in 1805, on the initiative of the then-current owners of the palace, Aleksandra Potocka and Stanisław Kostka Potocki. The museum regularly organises temporary exhibitions, conferences and scientific seminars, publishes books, and offers teaching in both cultural and natural values of the Wilanów residence. The museum's vortal, an extensive repository of knowledge and educational resources, contains several thousand articles describing in detail the history and culture of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. The museum also introduces new technologies that enhance the visitors' experience.



MUSEUM of King
Jan III's PALACE
at WILANÓW