



Lights
on
the Silk Roads

Table of Contents

0. Introduction	5
1. The Four Major Civilization Areas	7
I. Mediterranean Region	8
II. Central Asia	14
III. Indian Subcontinent	20
IV. Eastern Asia	26
1) Western Region	26
2) The Yellow River Civilization Region	30
3) Japan	38
2. Arabesque Pattern	41
3. Night Lamps	45
4. Tea Ceremony	49
5. Aladdin	53
6. Grassland	59
7. Jomon Pottery	63
8. Sea Route and Europe	67
9. My Travel Journals	71
10. The Silk Road Lamps Seen in Travelogues	85
11. Summary	91
12. Final Notes	95
13. References and museums	97

0. Introduction



I have been collecting oil lamps on the Silk Roads(hereinafter referred to as “lamps”) for many years.The reason why I started this research is that I had been looking at the vision of floating lamps in my childhood and was inspired by reading about the Silk Roads expeditions in my youth.

In this book, the lamps are categorised according to their wick holding structure into the Eastern Mediterranean (Greece and the eastern Mediterranean), Central Asia (including East Turkistan), the Indian subcontinent (mainly Buddhist) and Eastern Asia. Many of the lamps seem to have originated in each of the four ancient civilizations. I have also studied the process of their evolution in each sphere and their spread to other spheres.

The term “lamp” I refer to in this book is an appliance to light a lamp by using a bundle, twisted cord or woven cloth as a lighting wick with the use of pith, vegetable or mineral fibres, fueled by vegetable fats, animal fats or in some cases mineral fats.

These lamps were called “oil lamps” until the spread of paraffin lamps at the beginning of the 20th century, which were also called as Yuto or Tokaki.

1. The Four Major Civilization Areas

I. Mediterranean Region

(Includes Greece, the northern and eastern
Mediterranean coasts)

The Mediterranean lamp is said to be originated in the Eastern Mediterranean Coast or Greece in about 2000 BC. The fuel is mainly olive oil. Many were made of terra cotta, and later some were made of bronze.

Change and spread of primitive shell-shaped ramps on the eastern coast of the Mediterranean

① is a shell mold with a twisted mouth at one end of the plate, followed by an initial wheel molding (②) and then a mold like ③, transforming into the so-called Greek-Roman mold (said to have evolved from ②). Later, the main production area expanded from Greece, Rome and to Tunisia (④). In Tunisia, the production of lamps with a unique tangerine colour was expanded to the entire Mediterranean region, and the lamps were exported to Yemen via the Red Sea.



① The original shell



② Early Roman form



③ Bee pattern
molding



④ Tangerine horse
pattern molding



⑤ Syria

⑥ Iran

⑦ Iran

⑧ Morocco

⑨ Crete Reproduction

⑩ Syria Bronze

⑪ Israel Bronze

⑫ Iran, Bronze, Sasaki Family

⑬ Jewish Hanukkah crest

⑭ The Christian cross crest

⑮ Greek Orthodoxy $A\omega$

⑯ Greek Orthodoxy XP



This dish-shape lamp type with a pinched spout spread to Iran⑥, ⑦, and Morocco ⑧, but it also appears to have spread to the western part of the country.



Change and spread of lamps with tubular wick holders during the Minoan period in Crete

A lamp with a tubular wick ⑨ (with a reproduction steel sticker) spread over the east coast of the Mediterranean Sea, ⑩ and ⑪.

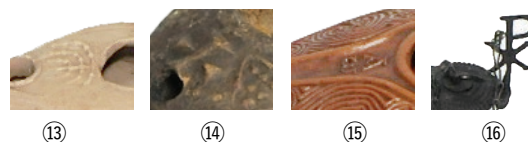


In Iran, as explained below, it became widespread in the form of the wick groove, a characteristic of central Asia, where the top of the wick tube is open.



Lamps with a religious crest

The seven-branched Hanukkah crest is for Jewish ceremonies (⑬). The cross crest is Christian (⑭). A and ω are the beginning and end letters of the Greek alphabet representing Christ (⑮ reproduction). XP stands for the Greek letter Christ and is Greek Orthodoxy (⑮ made in bronze). Those with religious emblems are rare in Islam and other cultures.





Geometric pattern, from B.C.10c



Geometric Flower and Bird Pattern from B.C. 8c



Geometric bird pattern, from B.C. 5c

Changes in Ancient Greek Patterns

Although these are reproductions, I included them here because they offer a taste of ancient Greek culture. Ancient Greece is said to have led the way in lamp manufacturing technology and design.

Spreading to other regions

As noted on p. 8, lamps were exported from Tunisia to Yemen, where it is said that Greek and Roman lamps were brought to Arikamedu, near the south-eastern tip of the Indian subcontinent, by the Romans in the 1st and 2nd centuries. There appears to have been no lamp exchanges between the Yellow River civilization region.

The stone lamps of Lascaux, France, which are said to be the oldest in the world, the stone lamps of the Stone Age, and the alabaster lamps of Tutankhamun of ancient Egypt are not mentioned here because they are different from those of the Silk Roads, i.e. Greek and Roman lamps.

Lamps that appear in travelogues, etc.

Marco Polo; translated by Kazuo Aoki: “He offered the holy oil of the burning lamp over Christ’s holy grave to Kublai Hahn.”

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2. Ancient Orient Museum (2000). *What pottery paints tell about Ancient Greek* [壺絵が語る古代ギリシャ]. : Yamakawa Shuppansha.

II. Central Asia

(the eastern Mediterranean is excluded,
except for some parts of East Turkestan)

Bactria, Afghanistan, and others play an important role on the Silk Roads and influence the lamps of other regions of the world. Many of the Mesopotamian lamps were imported from Syria, Bactria and Afghanistan.



- ① Talc, Afghanistan
- ② Talc, Mesopotamia
- ③ Double deer pattern, talc, Bactria
- ④ Incised pattern, talc, Afghanistan
- ⑤ Arabesque pattern on camel, Alabaster
- ⑥ Arabesque Design, God's figure, talc
- ⑦ Circular dot pattern, marble
- ⑧ Waterfowl Alabaster, Pakistan
- ⑨ Silverizing glaze, Afghanistan
- ⑩ Greening blue glaze, Afghanistan
- ⑪ Shoe-shape, Yarkand
- ⑫ Shoe-shape, steel, Pakistan



Stone lamps

In central Asia, stone lamps were made as far back as BC (ref. 1.). The results of X-ray analysis show that the talc lamps (①, ②, ③, and ④) are almost homogeneous(ref. 2.), and the Mesopotamian lamps (②) are presumed to have been brought in from Afghanistan. Incidentally, it is said that Raspyrazli products from Baxian in northeastern Afghanistan were transported to Mesopotamia, and chlorite stone products from Kermane were transported to Mesopotamian cities and Mohejondaalo(ref. 3.).



In addition, many of the lamps are made of stone such as ⑤, ⑥, ⑦, and ⑧. The circular point inscription in (⑦) is inlaid with metal, and the shape of the wick spout (⑧) is somewhere between the beak shape of central Asia and that of India, and is close to the shape of the white jade three-pointed lamp in the collection of the Xinjiang Uyghur Museum (see the Western Region chapter).



Expansion of lamps with an elongated wick spout

The earliest silver lamp found in a king's tomb at Ur, the ancient Mesopotamian city, around 2500 B.C., is thought to be a halved snail with a relatively long wick spout④). This type of lamp is a characteristic of Central Asia ⑨⑩⑪⑫. (See Appendix-1)





⑬ Cast iron, Korea



⑭ Kaolinite, Egypt



⑮ Earthenware, Morocco

Lamps with an elongated wick spout can be found in Korea, Egypt and Morocco. It is uncertain whether or not there is a relationship.

Influence of Greece

Lamps with open-groove structures of Central Asia can also be found in Iran, even though the main body is a tube shape influenced by the shape of the Greek region. I believe this is an influence of Hellenism.

Import and Export

Mesopotamia had its unique lamps, but many were also imported from Afghanistan and the Syrian regions. I will talk about the leather bag-shaped lamp later in this book. A seventh-century lamp excavated at the Egyptian site of Fustat closely resembles an Iranian lamp in shape and glaze (p. 9-10 ⑥) (ref. 5.). It may have been exported from Iran.

Lamps that appear in travelogues

Ibn Battuta. (1304-1378). *Travels in Asia and Africa* [大旅行記]. Heibonsha.

"The Syrian and the Iraqis often compete by hanging lamps to show off the beauty and their vanity, but always Syrians seem to do better."

J. Chardin. (1643-1926). *Voyages du Chevalier Chardin, en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient* [ペルシャ見聞録]. Heibonsha.

"The Persians rarely use candles for lighting in their homes, instead they use pure and odorless wax-like white tallow. They will follow the king by offering and holding golden candlesticks."



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2. Shigeo Sasaki. (1999). *Lamp of the Far North* [北極のランプ あかり](pp. 32). Lighting Culture Study Group.
3. Tadahiko Otsu, Ken Goto.(1999). *Stone tools and stone containers* [石器と石製容器]. Middle Eastern Cultural Center.
4. Ancient Orient Museum. (1997). *Ancient Oil-Lamps from The Mediterranean* [地中海のともしび].
5. Middle East Culture Center. (1999). *Overseas Excavation Research* [海外発掘調査].

III. Indian subcontinent

Poeple used lamps were already in the 5th or the 6th century B.C., as there are words such as “sun, moon, lamp, buddha” and “burning lamp” in Buddhist scriptures. Lamps in the India region are characterized by beak-shaped wick spouts.



- ① Buddha figure, Afghanistan
- ② Schist, Gandhara
- ③ Ganesha, copper alloy
- ④ Laxime, copper alloy
- ⑤ 7 spout, copper alloy
- ⑥ 5 spouts, cobra, copper alloy
- ⑦ 7 spouts, copper alloy, India
- ⑧ 7 spouts, silvered glaze, Gorgan
- ⑨ Bird lamp
- ⑩ 3 spouts, bird lamp



Beak-shaped lamp spout

There are many lamps with figures of gods and Buddhas, as well as human figures. When it comes to Buddha figures, there often are Bamian Buddha statues (①) and Gandhara (②). And in Hinduism, Ganesha (③) and Lakshmi (④) are widely used. In the mountains of the Himalayas, there are statues of gods and beasts. It is often used to enshrine a lamp to the gods and Buddha.

Lamps with human figures and figures of deities are rare in Central and Eastern Asia.



Beak-shaped multiple wick spouts

There are also many lamps (⑤ and ⑥) with beak-shaped wick spouts, which can be found in Indonesia in the south (⑦) and in the west part of Northeastern Iran (⑧). I have heard that Buddhist monuments are being discovered in Northwestern Iran, and I wonder if the influence of Buddhism has come to this country. In the north, it was also illustrated in a silk painting discovered in Dunhuang (ref. 1). It even has a copper alloy with a dozen or even more spouts stacked on top for multiple layers(ref 2.). At Arikamedu, near the south-eastern end, there is a seven-spouted earthen lamp.



Barometric type

There are lamps which are shaped like birds, elephants, and pagodas. There are even widely spread lamps called “Bird Lamp”⑨⑩. As fuel is consumed, fuel flows out of the oil reservoirs replacing it with air. It is also called the Barometric type or the Gravity type. In addition to birds and elephants, there are also stupa-shaped lamps in Sri Lanka (p.67-68). The origin of the barometric type is said to be the Indian subcontinent, but still not yet confirmed. (See Appendix-2.)

Himalayan region

The fuel is high in animal fats and oils. Sometimes People used butter which burns and is relatively odorless. Many of them were used in religious ceremonies.

In Nepal, I was amazed by the majesty of the Himalayas. I ended up buying two bronze offering figure-shaped lamps there.

Exchange and expansion with other regions

As mentioned before, the beak-shaped wick spout is widely found in Buddhist regions.

A dish-shaped lamp with a beak spout excavated at the Indus site of Rangsmur (③). This may be the archetype of the lamp's wick spout in the India region. Lamps similar to this one was said to exist in Mesopotamia (④), so it is possible that there were exchanges of lamp cultures. In addition, there was a cultural exchange between the Indus, Mesopotamia and northern Afghanistan (⑤). As noted on p. 13, Greek-Roman lamps were brought to Arikamedu on the southeastern tip of the Indian peninsula. Hieizan Enyakuji temple's night lanterns are thought to have been brought back to China about 1900 years ago by Ho-ken, who saw the idea of a night lantern at the Gion Seisha in India (⑥). Then, Saicho later imported them to Hieizan of Japan. This will be described in the chapter on the Night Lamps.

There is a Zoroastrian tower of silence near Sir Pheroze Shah Metha Park in Mumbai (then Bombay), where I saw many birds flying in the sky by coincidence in 1964. Maybe a bird funeral was being held. I wished to see the Zoroastrian lantern, but was refused because of my paganism.



Sculpted talcum stone



Divine beast shaped earthenware



Lotus flower plaster



Chorten-shaped copper alloy

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5. Ken Goto. (2000). *Four Great Civilizations Indus* [四大文明 インダス].
6. Hokken. (1971). *Translation and Annotation of The Lotus Sutra* [法華傳] (Kazutoshi Nagasawa, Trans.). Heibonsha. Toyo Bunko.
7. *Ryukoku University Survey Report*. (2008).
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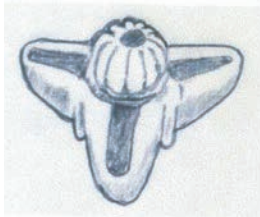
IV. Eastern Asia

1) Oil lamps in the western region

The western side of the East-West Trade Route, which is also known as 絲綢路(shichoro), is the eastern end and the main area of the Silk Roads. It was difficult to collect lamps in this area, but I describe the different lamps with references. Ho-ken and Sanzo Hoshi(Xuanzang Sanzang) took this route to the west, but there is no mention of lamps in either the "Biography of Ho-ken" or "The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Regions" or other records of 19th century expeditions.

Kunlun Shanbeirok Road (Western South Road)

Genjo Sanzo took this route on his way back from India. According to the “Tohokenbunroku” (The Travels of Marco Polo), Marco Polo is said to have offered Kublai the holy oil of the lamp from Christ’s holy tomb in Jerusalem via this route, including Hotan, Chalchan, and Ropunur. The eastern part of the Western South Road is said to have gradually declined due to the progress of desertification after the 7th century.



①



②



③



④

① Kashgar

Three-spouted white jade lampstand from the Song Dynasty (Xinjiang Uyghur Museum. Kodansha Literature Publishing House. 1987) It resembles a 6th century BC Greek marble lamp (D; Metropolitan Art Collection. Fukutake Bookstore. 1991) with a central hole for hanging, but the lamp spouts are similar to the shape from Central Asia.

② Yarkand

A shoe-shaped earthenware oil lamp of Central Asian origin.

③ Hotan

Yellow jade oil lamp (Collection of Shandong Provincial Museum). It was described as a deer head pot, but I think it maybe an oil lamp.

④ Hotan

Black jade oil lamp with a double dragon pattern .

This kind of Islamic form is originated in the Mediterranean regions.

Tianshan South Road (Western Area North Road)

A cast iron oil lamp with a long-groove spout, typical of the Central Asian region (see Appendix-1)

⑤ Aksu: Cast iron oil, its wick spout is shorter and wider.

⑥ Aksu: Round oil dish, bronze oil lamp, and the three pieces above are illustrations from the auction documents of 中華古玩網 (Chinese antique network), 2005.9.5

⑧ Shaanxi Province: Cast iron oil lamp, eastward progression of shape transformation (⑤ to ⑦)

The transformation from the Central Asian type to the Yellow River civilization type is clear. (See Appendix-1.)

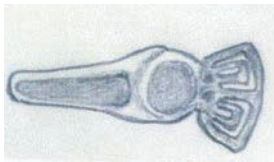
⑨ Turfan: A leather bag-shaped oil lamp of Central Asian origin.

A local trading company reported that oil lamps were used for boring in Karez.

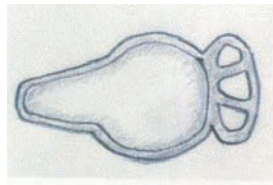
⑩ Xi'an : This clay oil lamp was aquired in Xian Hui village. This leather bag type is an inheritance of the Central Asian archetype, having been passed down through the oasis from one point to the next. In China, it is referred to as a square shape.

⑪ Aksu: A clay oil lamp in the form of a shell plate. The wick spout is same as the Mediterranean shell-shape. Referred from 中華古玩網(Chinese antique network)

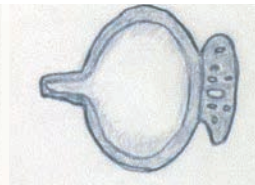
⑫ Gansu Province: Bowl-shaped Brass Inlaid Tiger Bronze Oil Lamp. This lamp is made of copper and zinc ores.



⑤



⑥



⑦



⑧



⑨



⑩



⑪



⑫

Other oil lamps that appeared in the documents.

Jisai Kingdom

"South of Gaochang, north of Moon-dua country, Tuolufang. Konkoji Temple was renamed as Fushiryuji Temple by Sanzo Hoji. Sha Wujing prepared a lamp, and Wukong took it and went after Sanzo", etc. (07.02.23), "Illuminated Sanzo's feet with a lamp", etc. (07.02.24), Yumie Hiraiwa; Journey to the West[西遊記] (Mainichi Shinbun) has a series of illustrations by Yasuhiro Yomogida.

In the Wusizhang Kingdom, "At the foot of Lingshan, an incarnation of a marten stole the kerosene from Buddha's glass plate and fled. Zhu Bajie accompanied. (Hiraiwa, Yumie; Saiyuki, 06.04.02)

Kucha

According to NHK Special, New Silk Road Week 5 Photo Collection 05.05.15; there is a photo of a dish-shaped lamp with a wick around the rim of the dish, at the Dovemaraju ruins. Buddhism is said to have been introduced from India to the Tang Dynasty via Kashgar and this region.

Dunhuang

The Perio Collection, Western Art, and the Guimet Museum of Art (Kodansha) has a silk-bound painting of the Five Buddhas of the Vajrayana Realm, painted in the 10th-11th centuries of the Northern Song dynasty, featuring an oil lamp with pronged triple spouts. In the 10th century, the silk map of descending demons depicts a yoraku attached lantern with seven wick spouts. The wick spout has the shape of a beak unique to the Indian subcontinent.

Guzhou

Yasushi Inoue; *Dunhuang*[敦煌] has a description of hemp oil.

Shaanxi Province

In G. Kleiner's *Travels in the Orient*[クライナーの東洋紀行] (translated by Kotani and Morita), there is an article about an earthen lamp which uses castor oil and a wick made of cotton from the western end of Yongshou County.

2) Yellow River Civilization Region

Oil lamps made of clay or bronze are said to have been produced during the Shang period in 1500 B.C. (Ref. 1.).

In 989 BC, there are inscriptions on a silver candleholder in the jewel of King Mu, the fifth king of the Zhou dynasty (Ref. 2.).



① High cup, self-supporting lamp wick,
The Han Dynasty

② Lamp wick measure China

③ Lamp wick spout (partial),
The Tsin Dynasty

④ Upright lamp wick spout, Korea

⑤ Japan

⑥ Slanting lamp wick spout, Viet Nam

⑦ Upright lamp wick spout, Vietnam

⑧ Celadon porcelain, Sawankhalok

⑨ Lidded lamp wick spout, China

⑩ Lidded double-lamp wick spouts, Korea

⑪ Lidded lamp wick spout, Japan

⑫ Lidded lamp wick spout, Khmer



Changes in the lamp wick retention method

In the Yellow River Civilization, oil lamps were probably fuelled by solid animal grease. A vegetable fibre wick was set in the centre of the dish and secured by melting the gypsum, which becomes solid at room temperature (①). Next, the wick was held in the centre stud of the dish (②). Some of them have multiple studs.

In the later Jin or Song dynasties, an upright spout was invented to further stabilize the wick (③). However, this is thought to have happened after the widespread of liquid fuels from plants and other sources. This structure was extremely convenient to prevent oil droplets and burnt residue from spilling out of the vessel at that time, and it spread to the Korean Peninsula (④), Japan (⑤), Vietnam (⑥), Thailand (⑦), and other East Asian Chinese cultural regions.



Lidded lamp wick spout

An oil pan with a wick spout on the lid is also found in China (⑨), Korea (⑩), Japan (⑪), Khmer (⑫), Thailand (⑫), Myanmar and other countries in East and Southeast Asia.

These lidded spouts, along with the upright spouts mentioned above, are curiously limited only to East Asia and are not found in the west of India, despite their convenient structure.

The design of the lidded wick spout was later widely applied to petroleum lamps.





Indonesia

Bronze Lamps

(appears in Chapter 8. Sea Routes and Europe)



Indonesia

Javanese Bronze Lamp

These two bronze lamps above are of the Central Asian archetype. It is thought that the Hui tribe, who are widely present throughout Asia, brought these Central Asian lamp shapes to various parts of the world via the Sea and the Silk Roads. They may have been one of the leaders in the propagation of lamp culture. (See chapter on Sea Routes.)



- ⑬ Adjustable lamp, Sahari, Han
- ⑭ Cattle shape with rotating fire bag, bronze, Chinese characters, reference
- ⑮ 5-mouth oil pipe, hard earthenware, Shilla
- ⑯ Mouse lamp, Seto
- ⑰ Blue underglazed porcelain, Arita
- ⑱ Colour illustrations, Old Noritake pierced pierced earrings
- ⑲ Blue underglazed porcelain, Jingdezhen
- ⑳ Cup shape, copper alloy, Viet Nam



Lamps with a special structure

A variety of lamp structures have been invented in Eastern Asia, that are not found in other cultures. ⑬ is foldable (rokuro). The cow-shaped lamp (⑭) can adjust the brightness by rotating the torch bag. ⑮ is unique in that it has five saucers attached to an elaborate oil pipe made of hard earthenware from Silla (Yoraku was attached to the original). Similar structures include Kelnosring in Hebron Iron Age, and Turkish Bronze Age ritual pottery(ref. 3.), and there is also Kelnosring in Jordanian Iron Age (ref. 4.). However, the relationship between the two remains unclear. ⑯ is a mouse-shaped lamp with a gravitational flow system. Similar to this, Nezumi Tankei is a precisely made lamp unique to Japan.

In the Korean peninsula, during the Koguryo period around the time of the first century, a mural painting in the Ping An South Road Residency in Anseong-dong, depicts a lighted lamp without a wick. (similar to ① p. 31-32)

In Japan, there are also theories that people already used earthenware lamps from the Jomon period (Jomon period) as well as those from the Jinmu period (called hobe). However, it is said to have been originally introduced along with Buddhism, and the simple dish with a wick on the edge called “Tousan (灯盏)” was introduced with it. Then, oil lamps were named “Hyosoku (秉鎖)” after Lee Baek’s poem, “Playing at night with a lighted candle” (p.75). This type of upright lamp wick tube (⑤), also known as tankoro, became popular after the Edo period.



Expansion

Lamps were exported from Japan (⑰,⑱) and China (⑲) to other cultural areas. In Vietnam, there are copper-alloy lamp(⑳) of the European continental type that the French brought in during the colonial period. However, there is almost none in the Eastern Asian region that is influenced by the Mediterranean region.

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3. Adachi Takuro (ed.) (2001). *Countries in the era of the Old Testament*[旧約聖書時代の国々]. Middle Eastern Culture Center.
4. *Jordan Exhibition*. (2004). Setagaya Art Museum.
5. Hiroshi Moriguchi.(1994) ; *Tankoro in China* [中国のたんころ], *Akari* 27th issue.
6. Ken Kishi. (1967). *Shinwa* [親和146～163], page. 146-163
7. Mitsugu Yamaguchi; *Oil-saving lamp* [省油灯]. *Akari* No. 27th issue.

3) Japan

In Japan, upright lamps (tankoro) were widely used as standing lamps, Andon(movable lanterns), Chochin(portable lanterns), wall hanging lamps, and suspended lamps. Some of them have holes for screwing nails in the bottom so that they can be secured when used as Chochin and so on.



In China's Tangji and Joseon, there are lamps combined with komainu (guardian dogs), but there are hardly any lamps with functional structures as described above.

Both are limited to East Asia. For example, some of them are made of Greek marble, some are made of clay which were found at the Pompeii ruins, some are made of clay found at the Kabyle ruins in Bulgaria, and there are also lamps made of jade like the one I saw in the Xinjiang Uyghur Museum collections. All of those tubes are not for lamp wicks, but for installing the suspension fittings.

Other major Japanese lamps that are considered to be related to foreign countries

The lamp on the right is modeled after the Chinese pottery wheel lamp, and the lamp dish is foldable and retractable. The original one just has a stud wick stand, while this lamp has an upright wick tube spout. This upright lamp type is also rare in Japan. (H; 10.5cm)



The lamp on the left is called “Katou(pottery lamp),” which is similar to a night study lamp in China, and is placed on top of the lamp chimney (Hoya:火屋) when used for reading. When there is wind or the lamp is used while sleeping, it is stored under Hoya. (H; 22.5cm)

The lamp on the right is called “Happo” or “Hachiken”. It is hung under a large umbrella and lit in a large room. (L; 21.8cm) Similar types of lamps are said to have existed in Israel in ancient times, but its relationship between them remains unclear. Lamps made of copper plate with an oil droplet catch and a suspension hook became widely popular.



2. Arabesque Pattern





Some of the oil lamps on the sea-land and land-based cultural exchange routes from the east to the west have the vine and grass patterns known as arabesque patterns. I will introduce 12 lamps selected from among them.

The history of the arabesque pattern can be traced back to Egyptian and Mesopotamian water lily patterns. One theory tells that those patterns have been introduced to Japan via the Silk Roads and China. As the arabesque pattern on the lamps progressed eastward, the Chinese patterns, and especially the Japanese ones seem to have become more delicate and refined.



- ① Primitive wooden ivy patterned earthenware lamp, H; 7.8cm, Minoan civilization, Replica
- ② Roman earthenware lamp with grape vine motif, L; 9.5cm, Eastern Mediterranean coast
- ③ Embossed bronze lamp with wood and ivy man design, L; 17.0cm, Aegean Bronze Age, Reference
- ④ Floating wick glass lamp, H; 18.0cm D; 8.4cm, Embossed arabesque design, Egypt
- ⑤ Shoes-dyed earthenware lamp, H; 10.1cm, Hiva Uzbekistan, Replica
- ⑥ Camel-shaped alabaster lamp, L; 23.8cm, Parallel double wick stands, Afghanistan
- ⑦ Schist Lamp L; 17.0cm, Rosette-shaped handle in the oil reservoir, Gandhara
- ⑧ Slate lamp with human face engraved handle L; 16.5cm, Central Asia
- ⑨ Blue underglazed white porcelain evening reading lamp H; 12.4cm H; 16.0cm, China
- ⑩ Blue underglazed white porcelain lamp, H; 16.8cm, inscribed in the year of Daming Xuande, Jingdezhen, Reference
- ⑪ Blue underglazed coal bamboo tenon lamp D; 9.0cm, Japan
- ⑫ Celadon Tankei H; 14.14cm. 1804-1922 Mita Seiji, Japan, Gravity-type

3. Night lamps



In the Konpon-chudo Hall of Enryakuji Temple at Mount Hiei, there is an all-night lamp that Saicho (also known as Dengyo Daishi) himself was said to have lit in the beginning 1200 years ago. He probably took the inspiration from the all-night lamp that he saw in Tang Dynasty China(c. 805) (Ref. 1.). (I was permitted to take and publish the photo above of the all-night lamp in the Ue Konpon-chudo hall under the condition that I include the Master's teachings here with the photo, which are "Carelessness is a great enemy" and "Legs down to the horizon".)

It's origin of this lamp probably is the all-night lamp from the Gion Shōja in India which was brought back to China by Hokkien. (About c. 399). Hokkien was in the Gion Shōja when a rat knocked off an all-night lamp, causing a huge fire that burned down the seven halls(Shichido Garan) (ref. 2.). Also, it is said that Sanzo Genjo (c. 630) worshipped flaming lanterns in India, and that he also saw lamps of the Buddha statue in the Tokojo Cave (ref. 3.).

There are traditional all-night lanterns in Hoshuzan Risshaku-ji and Motsu-ji temples as well as in Koyasan Tōro-dō, transferred from Enryaku-ji temple of Mt Hieizan.

Hinduism in India and Tibetan Buddhism today, still use ever-lighting lanterns for religious events. It seems to exist for quite some time. Japanese Esoteric Buddhism “Goma” described that there were relations with Zoroastrianism, Kenkyo, Brahmanism and other religions through the path of fire. Some believe that Agni, the fire of India, and Pakistan’s Burnt Lamp Buddha are also related. (references 7. and 8.). There might have been an all-night lamp road between the East and the West.

In Zoroastrianism, the ceremonial censer fire in which sandalwood(called Afargani) is burned, has been used since B.C.. It is said that this lamp has been burning ever since 3600 years ago (refs. 4. and 5.). I also heard that there are even some oil lamps which have been maintaining the fire, but I have not found any detailed records.

Near SirPheroze Shah Metha Park in Mumbai, India, there is a Zoroastrian tower of silence. I wanted to see the lamp, but I was refused because I am a pagan. The picture to the right is the lamp of the Lama Temple. Its cup looks like the one for a Zoroastrian torch. There may be a relationship.

Marco Polo, in his 13th-century Eastern Travels, wrote about the all-night lamp at the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Battuta wrote in his travelogue in the 14th century about a glass hanging all-night lamp in Mecca. And it is said to still be lit at night.



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4. Tea ceremony

The following is an introduction to the lamps used in the evening tea ceremony. The lamps used in tea ceremonies are known as 油器yuki, 油月aburatsuki, 油次aburatsuki and 油坏aburatsuki). In addition to the items listed here, there are also some other types of foreign lamps, depending on preference.

①



②



③



④



⑤



⑥



⑦



⑧



⑨



Kawarake (①)

A dish-shaped lantern called “Kawarake” is placed on a saucer to be used as a receptacle for an andon, a stone lantern, a bamboo hanging lamp for small rooms, and a wood hanging lamp for a water house.

Surume (②)

A slightly larger, flat, Suzume-gawara(a type of tea ceremony lamps) called Surume is used for the open-air andon. Suzume Gawara and Surume are unique Japanese lanterns.

Suzume-gawara (also called Kawara-suzume, and Fukura-suzume) (③) : A work by 楽九代了入(Ryounyu the ninth).

In the early 1700s, unique Suzume-gawaras were invented and manufactured. There are several types of lamps such as unglazed, raku-yaki and oribe-yaki. They are used as urushi-painted Tankei or bamboo stands near the fireplace. The name “Suzume-gawara” may come from the fact that a bundle of wicks looks like a sparrow’s (Suzume) tail. It may be based on Jomon earthenware of incense burners and the like.

Ceramic Tankei (④)

Mita celadon porcelain Tankei (③) is also used as a wall-mounting lamp at the water house. This is the same type as the one I acquired in Isfahan, Iran, which is a green-glazed long lamp (p.9-10⑦), and they are used by themselves.

The lamp of foreign origin Some had a preference for using lamps imported from Iran and China.

Incense burner (⑤) : Bird-shaped white copper incense burner, made by Shugoro Hasuda. This can also be used as a lamp.

Incense burner(⑥) : Night study lamp (also used for resting a lid.) Qing dynasty

Lid stand

Lamp (⑦) and Hoya (⑧), which can also be detached and used as a stand.

Iron Klin : It was said to be used for heating the cups in the ancient tea ceremony.

The use of oil lamps in modern tea ceremonies has gradually declined. However, it is said that there is nothing better than the light of an oil lamp to produce a subtle and profound atmosphere. Junichiro Tanizaki’s “*In-ei-rai-san*” (*In Praise of Shadows*) has a similar description.

5. Aladdin



When it comes to lamps, we often associate the Ala al Din lamp with the topic.

The Arabian Nights was written in Persian in the Middle Ages and was translated into Arabic in the middle of the 8th century. It is said to become widely known after the French orientalist Antonic Galland added the “Magic Lamp” , a story in China, in the early 18th century(reference 1-6). It is only a story, but it is an essential topic for Silk Road lamps.

The followings are the finding from the readings and other sources. The man who told the location of the lamp was an African wizard, born in China, who had been in India, Persia, Arabia, and traveled to Syria, Egypt, etc., and then finally lived in Morocco. The story was set in the capital of the country where there are rich and prosperous Muslim temples in the East Turkestan region. This pocket sized lamp is made of old and dirty metal, with a wick using fuel like oil.

I deduce from the above that the lamp was made in Kashgar, which was a key location in the ancient East-West exchange and also had metalworkers. Or the lamp may have been brought in via the Silk Roads. This is the story of the lamp in the Silk Road region that I have been researching.



- ① Copper, France
- ② Mosaic, Morocco
- ③ Superalloy, Cairo
- ④ Superalloy, India



The Frenchman John Kiddell Monroe's illustrations in Dixon's "*Arabian Nights*" (Rereference 1) is the traditional French lamp (①). In each region, according to the local culture, various shaped lamps are produced and sold as souvenirs in order to tell stories and promote the local culture (②,③ and ④). I selected the following four lamps as references.



①



③



②



④

Quiet, no servants, treats, or treasures appear when any lamp in my collection is rubbed. However, collecting, organizing, exploring the history of where they came from, and exploring the traces of history and culture from ancient and modern times, bring me infinite joy more than just magic.

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6. Grassland (Thrusting Lamps)

It is said that these lamps are often used in dwelling tents on grasslands or in snow-covered areas with the lamps propped up on the ground. On the right of the photo is a Tibetan lamp and on the left is a Turkish lamp. They are all made of wrought iron and have an oil pan and protruding rod in one piece. I once saw an African lamp of exactly the same style on display at Ginza Matsuya.

Tadao Umezawa; "*Kaiso no Mongolu*" (*Mongolia in Reminiscence*) published by Chuko Bunko, introduces a metal lamp with a bottom tip called "Den", which is used for thrusting into the ground. A standing lamps were on display at the Viking Museum in Oslo, Norway.



The stone lamp in the collection of the Hokkaido Folk Museum is from Chishima. In addition, stone lampshades have been excavated at Urumori Island and Horomushiro Island (Reference 1.). It is said that they may have been left behind by a Khodiak Inuit who had lived in Chishima in the past. (Reference 2.). The stone lamp in the photo to the right is presumed to be from the northeast end of Chishima. It seems to have been used by putting a foot pole through the hole on the right and thrusting into the ground.



Inuit from both coasts of Bering Strait, Alaska, Greenland, and other areas use large lamps made of talcum stone, which use marine animal fat as fuel. Depending on the uses like lighting, cooking, heating, and other purposes, people can adjust the number of wicks made of dried moss and other materials (Reference 3.).

In the Hokkaido Northern Folk Museum, there is a lamp called Rachako, which uses scallops and sea animal fat as fuel, birch bark as a wick, and a small wooden dish on a three-way wooden stand propped up against the ashes of the furnace (pictured right). There is also a lamplighter called a Chinoetta, which is a cigarshaft of wrapped birch bark inserted into tree branch. Ryunosuke Akutagawa described “The primitive light of rolled birch bark and the blazing fire. These two kinds of light and dark glows tell of the rise and fall of the lighting civilization.” (from “*Yarigatake e 檜ヶ岳へ*”).



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7. Jomon Pottery



① Bat-shaped pottery



② Tsuride pottery



③ Totte pottery

Numerous tsuride potteries of the mid Jomon period were excavated from the Chubu region to the Kanto region. Some of the Jomon potteries are said or assumed to be lamps.

① is a mid-Jomon period's bat-shaped pottery thought to be a lamp excavated at the Musashi-Taito site in Fuchu City, H;7.0cm. It looks vaguely similar to a lamp with wick and animal head motif, H;7.0cm, excavated in the Azerbaijan region which was used around the beginning of the A.D., now in the collection of Ancient Orient Museum. (Travel Journal on Dec 16, 1999)
This photo was taken at the Collection Office of Goshiki-bashi Bridge, Tokyo, and approved for publication.

② is a Tsuride(hanging) pottery excavated at Fujimi-cho, Fujisawa, Nagano Prefecture, Japan (L;18cm). According to Mr. Hiromi Watada of Nagano Prefectural Museum of History, earthenware which is thought to be used as a lamp was only limited to the middle to late-middle Jomon period, mainly in Nagano and other parts of Chubu, Kanto, and Hokuriku regions, as well as Kanto region in the late-middle Jomon period. (Travel Journal on May 2, 2000)
Photo from Nagano Prefectural Museum of History, approved for publication.

I suspect this is the archetype of the pottery used for tea ceremony, which will be described in the next section.
Among many other tsurite pottery excavated in Chubu and Kanto regions, those with a long handle resemble the frankincense burner displayed in the Yemen Pavilion and the Central Asia Pavilion at Expo '05 Aichi, Japan (p.68-69⑭,p.77).

③ is a mid-Jomon period's Totte(handle) pottery from the Mawaki ruins, a collection of Jomon Museum, L;15.2cm. It is considered to be about 4,500 years old, and to be the oldest lamp in Japan. I visited on June 20, 2003. This photograph was approved for publication from Jomon Museum of the Mawaki ruins. Lamps with a boat-shaped oil reservoir and a wide wick opening are found in Central Asia (p. 9-10⑩) and in Inuit stone lamps excavated from North Kuril Island (in Hakodate City Northern Peoples' Museum), but the relationship between them remains unclear.

If the above Jomon pottery is confirmed as lamps, they are as important as the history of lamps in the four major civilizations.

8. Sea Route and Europe



Along the southern coast of the continent, also known as the Road of Spice and the Road of Pottery, from Japan to Portugal, we have selected 20 lamps as much as possible to avoid duplication with the previously mentioned ones.

⑨ Buddhist

⑩ Duplication of ancient Islamic lamp forms in Central Asia, p. 34

⑭ Lamps manufactured in Tunisia and exported to Yemen, see p. 8

⑮ Coconut oil & coconut shell lamp Reference

A Roman-Greek lamp found in Arikamedu, India, is also thought to be introduced in the sea route chapter, see p. 23.

① Hyosoku, Japan

② Standing double wick spouts, White porcelain, Korea

③ Tankoro, Okinawa

④ White porcelain, Wuxi, Jiangsu, China

⑤ Blue glaze, Shiwan Pottery, Guangdong

⑥ Glaze with two spouts, Vietnam

⑦ Water-cooled double dish, Khmer

⑧ For hand holding and suspending, Bronze, Thailand

⑨ Bronze, Figure drawn afterwards, Indonesia

⑩ Bronze, Islamic Type, Indonesia

⑪ Bronze, Mumbai, Myanmar

⑫ Peacock, Gravity type, Copper Alloy, Calcutta

⑬ Gravity stupa type, Sri Lanka

⑭ Petal design, Earthenware, Yemen (Replica)

⑮ Coconut Shells, Coconut Oil, Cape Town

⑯ Figure-bearing form, Earthenware, Cameroon

⑰ People mouth shape oil filter, Earthenware, Mali

⑱ Glazed pottery, Morocco

⑲ Silver, Spain

⑳ Bronze, Portugal





9. My Travel Journals

Travel in Greece

Cyprus

We landed at the airport from Tehran with high hopes for the historical heritage here. However, I had already acquired a Tunisian horse-drawn lamp excavated in Cyprus. Due to the afternoon's appointment has been moved up, we switched to an earlier flight to Athens. August 11, 1992.

Athens

Greece is one of the birthplace and development of the lamp and I am overwhelmed by its history. The antique ones are pricey and unaffordable, but I got a few helpful reproductions with a lead seal from the museum.

According to the appendix, p.9-10⑨ is a lamp from the Minoan period 5500 years ago. The shape of the lamp wick cylinder is a feature of Greekea comparing to Syria in the Mediterranean Sea area. The Parthenon, the hill of the Acropolis changes its brilliance every moment in the morning sun. The wood ivy pattern is said to be one of the origins of the arabesque pattern. From the hotel window

Oil lamp mark in the Iwanami Shinsho

There was a swan-shaped lamp mark in the centre of the cover. One of the reason I was interested in lamps is that I was familiar with the graceful lamp symbol of the Iwanami Shinsho since I was a boy. According to a book entitled "Forty Years After the War: The History of Iwanami Shinsho," published in 1985, this lamp was an artifact of the ancient ruins, and it was selected for the first edition of the magazine in 1938. I looked for something similar, but could not find any.



In Athens, I found a similar one in the mark at the bottom left of the back cover of the Shinsho and thought it was the lamp, but I could not acquire it because of the price. I was relieved to find out later that this was an oil pot. The oil pot and water pitcher are sometimes mistaken for a lamp.

I think that the excavated objects of Greek descent was taken as a reference.

The oil difference and water droplets, etc. are sometimes mistaken for a lamp. It is imagined that all of them are modeled on the excavated objects of Greek descent. I'm dissapointed about the fact that his mark has recently been changed to another one for Iwanami Shinsho.

Approved for publication.



Travel in Turkey

In January 1964, I made a hasty visit to Turkey to discuss business with the Turkish government for a plant. It was -20 degrees Celsius at the Ankara airport and shrouded in diamond dust (ice-drop fog). I entered the hotel and ordered drinking water. I couldn't communicate in any languages I knew. When I said "Sui(water)" in Japanese as a last resort, He finally understood that I meant "Su(water)". My crude German was useful for our business meetings in Turkey.

On the way to our business meeting, I happened to visit an antique shop. I didn't know anything about lamps in the Mediterranean at the time, but I was still dreaming about lamps and the Silk Roads. This may be why I found the item on display as soon as I entered. It was a rococo-molded lamp of Greek origin, and it brought back the vision of the lamp in my childhood and awakened my dream from my youth. It became my first collection of the Mediterranean lamps and became the motivation for collecting lamps along the Silk Roads. I also stumbled upon a pipe made of sea-foam stone in Turkey, which led to my taste for pipe tobacco.

Travel in Israel

The Dead Sea is the lowest land in the world at 400 meters below sea level. Not a single tree, plant, or bird is to be found here, which is truly one of the world's polar regions.

We visited the same company in the Negev Desert, which is reminiscent of the stories of the Old Testament. With the help of this company, I was able to purchase the old Jewish, Christian and Islamic lamps in Israel. Jerusalem is also an important place of the three major religions.



Jewish



Christian



Islam

On the way home, we found an antique shop in Jerusalem with numerous ancient lamps, but we didn't have enough time to get back there, and we were trailing behind. It passed. Israel was one of the places of ancient lamp development.

We tried swimming in the Dead Sea. The unexpected wind blew us out of the water. Due to the buoyancy of the water, it was surprisingly difficult to get back up, and I hurried out of the Dead Sea. October, 1991.

Travel in Iran

In February 1954, on a flight to Ankara, Turkey, the plane landed at Tehran airport to refuel. I was fascinated by the view out the window during take-off and landing, and by unique articles like the arabesque patterned pipes made of robin and khatam-kari (parquet of metal, bone, ivory, etc.), which represent the culture of the Silk Roads.

Wrote in August 1992. Isfahan is an old city, with a history of 2,000 years. Especially during the 16th century Appalachian period, it was said that the half of the world's wealth was concentrated here. There was an abundance of coveted ancient lamps, but since it was a difficult time to take them out of the country, I refrained and bought only two of them. The photo on p. 9-10^⑫ is a bronze lamp with an open groove spout, which is thought to have been influenced by Greece, then was transformed into a Central Asian type lamp.

The lamp on the right is a green-glazed ceramic lamp. When used with a plug in the oil filler opening and filled with fuel, the fuel oil naturally flows down to the lamp's core tube as it burns. It can also be used as a Gravity type. It may be related to Japanese ceramic short Tankei and Mannen lamps. See Appendix-2.



Visit to EXPO-05 (Aichi Expo) Central Asia Pavilion

Uzbekistan Booth: Amongst many ceramic plates and other miscellaneous items I saw, there were shoe-shaped dyed lamps, and different patterns on lamps like blue sea waves, netting, and arabesque that are familiar to Japan. I felt a sense of familiarity with them. Although I found some are rare items, I didn't get them because I have one of the same type. There was also a green-glazed narrow-spout lamp, similar to the leather pouch shape.

Kyrgyzstan booth: There was a lamp with primitive spiral pattern with a narrow, long spout (Right). It was a display item, but I negotiated to purchase it. The shape of the lamp's spout, however, does not seem to be Kyrgyzstan native.



Kazakhstan Booth: In a showcase, there is a four-spouted earthenware lamp (Left, South Kazakhstan Semileche AD6-8c). The shape of this lamp's spout is similar to the jade lamp in the collection of Xinjiang Uyghur Museum (written later).



In another display case there is a glazed wide spout lamp (Right, AD10-12c). The groove is open all the way to the oil reservoir, which is a characteristic of the northern region in the Central Asia. It was non-negotiable as it's a collection of the museum.



Other booths: Turkish six-spouted oil lamps and Azerbaijani mineral oil lamps were displayed. Please refer to the section on the sea routes for more information on Yemen.

Travel in Xi'an

Xi'an is the starting point of the Silk Roads, or the starting point of the Silk Roads West. I was struck by the magnificent ancient fortifications of the city, and at the Giant Wild Goose Pagoda, I thought of Sanzo hoshi, and I was struck by the depth and richness of the Chinese history that created Chinese characters.

We explored the village towns of the Hui and other tribes. The influence of the Mesopotamian lamp culture on the Eastern Asian region has been unclear for years, but finally, we visited the village town, and I got something similar to an ancient leather bag (horn-shaped) lamp(photo on the right) originates in Central Asia.



Expansion into
Southeast Asia

The photo on the right shows a Palmetto pattern in relief, which is said to have originated in Mesopotamia, and it is an Islamic style lamp. They were made in Harbin in old Manchuria and sold in Xi'an, and like the above, they were widely distributed throughout China by the Hui and other tribes. They took the role of bringing culture via the Silk Roads.

古人秉(とり)燭夜遊 秉燭唯須飲 李白

Ancients bring a lamplight for enjoying the night. We should bring a lamplight and drink. - Li Bai

苦昼短夜長 何不秉燭遊 文選

We suffer long days and short nights. Why don't you bring a lamplight and enjoy the night. - Wen Xuan

The poem reminds us of the scenes of the past. The word “秉(とり)燭 Bing a lamplight” is the origin of the Japanese word for “秉燭 Hyosoku” or later replaced by “平仄 Hyosoku”. It stands at the starting point of the Silk Roads, and I was immersed in thoughts of the far west that I had always admired, and I cherish the culture of the ancient lamps.



絲綢路起点に立つ(2010.5.9).

Travels along the Seaways

Okinawa (Japan)

I found a rare brand-new Ryukyu-ware upright lamp at a shop in Tsuboya, Naha City. Perhaps because of the low viscosity of the oil in warm regions, the length of the tube is a little taller.

December 15, 1990.



Philippines

After finishing my field survey for the business in Iligan, Mindanao, I was on my way back to my hotel at dusk. The shop fronts and houses of family were lit up, and the thin, faint lights on the hillside made me feel a sense of sentiment of traveling, or rather the melancholy. I asked the local driver and acquired this lamp.

This is a lamp made of scrap materials. A scrap glass bottle was made into a body of the lamp. Its bottom half is used as an oil reservoir and the top half as a chimney. And a scrap can is cut in half, and its lower half is used as a stand and its upper half as a joint between the chimney and the reservoir. This piece does not fit in the collection, but I feel a sense of nostalgia, so I still included it here.

H;14cm,D;7.4cm.

March, 1991.

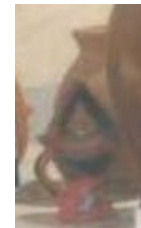


Yemen

I found a Roman Lamp at 05EXPO Pavilion. Tunisia was the place of mass production of Roman lamps in the past. It is a replica of the petal pattern lamp mentioned on an earlier page, but I acquired it as a souvenir.



It is not for sale and resembles a Japanese Tsuride Jomon ware (photo on the right), which is known as a frankincense burner.



There was also a box-like lantern with an upper and lower box decorated with precious stones. It is unknown if this is related to Japanese lanterns. (Right side of photo on the right)



June 30, 2005.

Travels along the Seaways -2- Portugal and Spain

Lisbon

If Japan is the eastern end of the Silk Roads in the broadest sense of the word, Portugal is the western end. There are many designs of both bronze and ceramic lamps. Some of them are old, but they are still manufactured and used in daily life.

Currently, although India is also making lamps, Portugal seems to be more thriving.

The orca shape is typical of a maritime nation. The swan shape is similar to the mark of Iwanami Shinsho described on p.72, except for the legs. The middle and lower left are new colored ceramic lamps.



Madrid

The photo on the right is a clay lamp from the 8th-11th century Islamic period.



Barcelona

The photo to the right is of a gilded silver lamp that seems to belong to the dynasty.



Appendix-1

Eastward progression of the shapes of spouts

In Mediterranean countries, the lamp wick spout is generally short, and it is longer in the Islamic countries of Central Asia, then become shorter again towards Shaanxi Province. It is thought that the shape of the lamp was brought in by travellers and others. In Indonesia, there is a lamp similar to the one in Shaanxi Province.



Mediterranean area



Iran



Afghanistan



Xinjiang Autonomous Region



Xinjiang Autonomous Region



Xinjiang Autonomous Region



Shaanxi



Korea Dynasty



Indonesia

Due to the poor auction results, for the lamps in Xinjiang Province, I used the sketches from the auction materials of the Chinese antique dealer network on September 5, 2005.



Han Dynasty, Stud



Japan Upright



Han Dynasty, China, The original model of the Western Lamp

The studs used to attach the lamp wick to the oil pan during the Han Dynasty, and the upright tube-type wick spout is thought to have been used after the Eastern Jin Dynasty. The stud type, which was mainly fueled by animal fat, did not expand and became a candlelight stand. The upright tube type spread to the East and Southeast Asia, but it did not seem to spread to the West. Later, it was adopted for Western lamps and spread widely throughout the world.

Appendix-2 Europe

The European oil lamps are different from those of the Silk Roads geography wise and their origin wise, but among Portugal, Spain, France, England, Germany, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Italy, excluding ancient Rome, two representing works from each country are included in the appendix. All are from the 18th century onward.

In England, there are whale-oil lamps, as is typical of maritime countries. It is interesting to note that the Czech Republic has bohemian glass and iron forged lamps in the shape of swans, a specialty of the country. Although not mentioned here, many of the newer ones in Europe are decorative lamps.

A stone lamp discovered in the Lascaux Cave in France is about 16,000 years old and is considered to be the oldest in the world. In Europe, apparently, Stone Age stone lamps have been found in many places.



- ① France, Forging, underground use
- ② France, Copper alloy
- ③ England, Wrought iron
- ④ England, Whale oil lamp, Wrought iron
- ⑤ Germany, Clock Lamp
- ⑥ Germany, Meissen Porcelain
- ⑦ The Netherlands, Flemish lamp, Copper alloy
- ⑧ The Netherlands, Tin
- ⑨ The Czech Republic, Swan, Bohemian glass, Reference
- ⑩ The Czech Republic, Wrought iron also used for candles, Reference
- ⑪ Italy, Leather bag shape, Bronze
- ⑫ Italy, Ceramic, Reproduction



10. The Silk Roads Lamps in Travelogues

Upstream of Heilongjiang(Amur) River

- Rinzo Mamiya.(1806). 東韃紀行(*Todatsu area journal*). Chikuma Shobo.
In the Deren region, they did not use oil lamps at night, but instead used candles.

Mongolia

- Tadao Umesao; 回想のモンゴル(*Recollections of Mongolia*). Chuko Bunko.
There is a metal lamp called a den. The only light in the room is often from the flame of the furnace. The lower part of the lamp is metal rod-shape, and is thrust into the ground. The upper metal lamp plate is filled with the fat and butter of cattle, sheep, goats and other animals as fuel.

Dunhuang, Jisai Kingdom, Tang

- Gies Jacques.(1994-1996). *Les Arts de l'Asie Centrale. La collection Pelliot au Musée Guimet, 2 volumes [西域美術]*. Kodansha.
A silk-bound painting of the Five Buddhas of the Vajrayana Realm on silk, painted in the 10th-11th century of the Northern Song Dynasty, depicts a three-spouted oil lamp. Whether metal or porcelain is unknown. On a 10th century silk painting entitled “Gomajodozu (Map of the Descending Demons)”, yoraku attached lamps are painted that appear to be made of copper alloy with 6 and 9 spouts.
- Yasushi Inouye. (1965). *Dunhuang [敦煌]*.
A hemp oil lamp in Urizhou was mentioned in the book.
- Sun-sin Chen. (1995). *Journey on the Silk Road [シルクロードの旅]*.
There is a mention of a large jar of oil for lamps in the tomb of the Manryaku Emperor (Meishinshu).
- Yumie Hiraiwa. (2007). *Journey to the West [西遊記]*. Mainichi Shinbun.
There is an illustration of an oil lamp in the country of Jisai Kingdom, south of Gaochang.
- The Great Master Chuangyeong Saicho. *Entering Tang.[入唐求法]*
There is a mention of seeing a Dharma lamp at Mt. Tendai. (804-805)
- Jikaku Master Ennin. *Pilgrimage to T'ang China [入唐求法巡礼行記]*. Heibonsha. Toyo Bunko.
It describes the thousand lanterns of bamboo spoon at Muryokuji Temple in Liuzhou Kaigenji Temple.

- Bai Juyi.(1988). *A Poem Collection of Bai Juyi [白居易詩抄]* (Ryo Mori, Trans.). Toyo Bunko 52, Heibonsha.
There is a mention about measuring the time of a cockfight by the amount of oil burned in the lampshade. Tibet.

- *The Treasures of Potala Palace [ポタラ宮の秘宝]*. (1996). Asian Cultural Exchange Association (Ed.).
I read that many of worshippers in the chapel used brass plate-shaped lampstands with a high base for offering a prayer.

- James Hilton. (1934). *Lost Horizon*.
Paper-covered mantels were mentioned as the lights in Shangrila's monastery room, there is a lantern on the way to the Great Lama's audience chamber, and finally, the Great Lama's room was described as being dimly lit.

Vermian, India

- Shinji Maejima. (1952). *Sanzo Genjo [玄奘三蔵]*, Iwanami Shinsho.
There is a record of worshipping Dipankara Buddha in Nagar, also when a statue of Buddha in a cave was seen with the light of a lamp in the Lighthouse Castle, the statue of Buddha disappeared, etc.

- Hokken. (1971). *Translation and Annotation of The Lotus Sutra [法華傳]* (Kazutoshi Nagasawa, Trans.). Heibonsha. Toyo Bunko.
The flames of the Gion Seisha continued to burn and did not cease to burn. When a rat held the lantern wick in his mouth and burned the banner lid, the fire finally spread and all of the seven-story complex burned down. (399-414)

- Sanzang Hoshi; *The Great Tang Dynasty Westward Chronicle [大唐西域記]*. *Mahayana Buddhism, Volume 9*. Chūkōronsha.
There is a mention about a human-faced bird figure dedicated to a lantern on the left-hand side of each attendant of the Great Buddha, but there is no description of its lantern type.

The Silk Roads in general

- *The Great Bombay Exhibition*. Yomiuri Shimbunsha

Numerous and diverse lamps have been excavated at the site.

- Marco Polo. (2011). *Eastern Observations* [東方見聞録] (Aoki Kazuo, Trans.). Kakakura Shobo.

There are records of mineral and vegetable oil sources and oil in many places along the 13th century travel route, but there is no mention of lamps. When Niccolò Polo, father of Marco, and Matteo, brother of Niccolò, returned home, Kubilai ordered the holy oil to be brought back from the lamp that was burning on the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. Marco went to Jerusalem and received the holy oil and dedicated to Kubilai.

- E. Dixon. (2001). *Fairy Tales From The Arabian Nights* [アラビアン・ナイト アラジンのランプ] (Yoshio Nakano, Trans.). Iwanami Shonen Bunko.

In the illustration, a metal-looking lamp appeared. The story is set in the East Turkestan.

- J. Chardin. (1643-1926). *Persian Observations* [ペルシャ見聞記]. Heibonsha 621.

"The Persians rarely use candles for lighting in their homes, and not oil, but white tallow, which is pure and fine like odorless wax, is used." "The head of the lamp department follows the king at all times, when riding or during the night, offering a golden lamp."

- G.L. Bell. (1863-1926). *Travels Across Syria* [シリア横断紀行]. Toyo Bunko.

He mentions that at Antioch, he saw a bronze lamp with a curly-haired cupid's head of Roman origin.

- Ibn Battuta. (1304-1378). *The Great Travels* [大旅行記]. Toyo Bunko. Heibonsha.

The Iraqis and the Syrians sometime compete with each other to hang opulent lanterns. However, the odds always seem to be in favor of the Syrians. In Mecca, a series of large glass lamps are hung and lit throughout the night. In Zulfar, on the east coast of the Arabian Peninsula, oil is extracted from coconut palms and used to light up the lamps. In Anatolia, the copper is used to make lamp stands. The kernels of the maftar fruit are harvested twice a year and produce oil for lamps around Delhi.

- Kunihiro Sugawa. (2003). *16 people living on an uninhabited island* [無人島に生きる十六人].

He was shipwrecked around 1900, and on an uninhabited island, he made a lamp by filling an empty can with sand, using green turtle's oil as fuel, and using unraveled canvas thread as the lamp's wick.

- G. Kleiner. (1992). *Travels in the East* [東洋紀行] (Hiroyuki Kotani and Akira Morita, Trans.).

There is a mention about an earthen lamp, and its wick is made of cotton, and fueled by castor oil. It was seen in Yongshou County in the west Shaanxi Province.

- Fernão Mendes Pinto. (1979). *The Voyages and Adventures of Fernand Mendez Pinto* [東洋遍歴記] (Okamura Takiko, Trans.). Toyo Bunko.

A silver lamp stand using six or seven wicks in Beijing, mid-16th century. 72 luxurious lamps with 10 or 12 wicks each in Northwest Pegu, Yangon, Myanmar.

- Daniel Defoe. (1951). *Robinson Adrift* [ロビンソン漂流記] (Kenichi Yoshida, Trans.). Shincho Sha.

On the island where they drifted, they made lamps out of clay made of goat fat and placed them in a sun-dried dish, and made lamp wick out of linen scraps.

- Takahito Mikasamiya. (1988). *Life in the Ancient Orient* [古代オリエントの生活]. Kawade Shobo Shinsha.

The tomb walls of El-Kabpaheri in 16th century BC Egypt. A lamp is lit for you at night.

11. Summary

Characteristics Based on the shape of the lamp wick holding structure, lamps can be classified as follows.

i. Eastern Mediterranean region

Cretan tube-like wick spout, and pinched spout with shell-shaped dish and upward-facing wick hole of eastern Mediterranean origin

ii. Central Asia

The slender open-groove, leather pouch, and horned type from the Mesopotamian civilization, and an evolution from the Eastern Mediterranean.

iii. Indian subcontinent

The beak-shaped spout in the Buddhist regions, which is thought to have originated in the Indus civilization region.

iv. Eastern Asia

The tube-shaped wick stand type evolved from the freestanding plate-type and weight-type light wick stands of the Yellow River civilization.

Expansion The spread from the four major spheres is generally as follows.

1. There are traces that the Greek Eastern Mediterranean style expanded throughout the Mediterranean Sea area, Central Asia and Southern India to Arikamedu. Marco Polo carried the holy oil of Jerusalem to the original city.

2. the Mesopotamian and other Central Asian styles, have been used by the widely settled Hui and other tribes, which sequentially established settlements in the western regions. It spread to Xi'an, China, the Northeast (former Manchuria) and even Indonesia via the Indian subcontinent.

3. The beak-shaped spout type from Rangsmur in the Indus Civilization period is not limited to the Indian subcontinent, but has also been used as a symbol of religion. Thanks to its influence, it spread to Dunhuang and Central Asia.

The all-night lamp of the Gion Shrine in India is thought to have been introduced to the Eastern Jin Dynasty by Hokken (The outward journey was by land and the return journey was by the sea routes.), and then it was introduced to Japan from the Tang Dynasty by Saicho and others.

4. The tube-shaped lamp stand of the Yellow River civilization appears to be confined to the East and Southeast Asia. This may be because there was no specific religion that contributed to the spread of Confucianism in the region.

5. I have not found any lamps unique to the western region, namely the original Silk Roads of Tianshan Road and Kunlun North Road. The shape of the Central Asian lamps is widespread. There are no articles found on “lamps” in any of the exploration records and travelogues of the western region. The Xizang has influences by India and China. Also, Parsee may have had influences on it.

6. The Shosoin does not have any imported lamps in their collection. Perhaps because lamplight was not normally used at Ise Jingu Shrine, there are no ancient Japanese lamps that have been spread to other countries. The “Suzume(sparrow)” for tea ceremonies is unique to Japan, and its prototype is thought to be Jomon earthenware. Lanterns such as inexhaustible lamps and wooden mouse lanterns are considered to be unique to Japan.

7. There are French lanterns in Vietnam during the French occupation, and Portuguese lanterns were brought to Macau during the Portuguese occupation.



Eastern Mediterranean,
Shell Shape



Central Asia,
Leather Bag Shape



Indian Subcontinent,
Beak



East Asia, Cone



Eastern Mediterranean,
Cylinder



Central Asia,
Open Groove

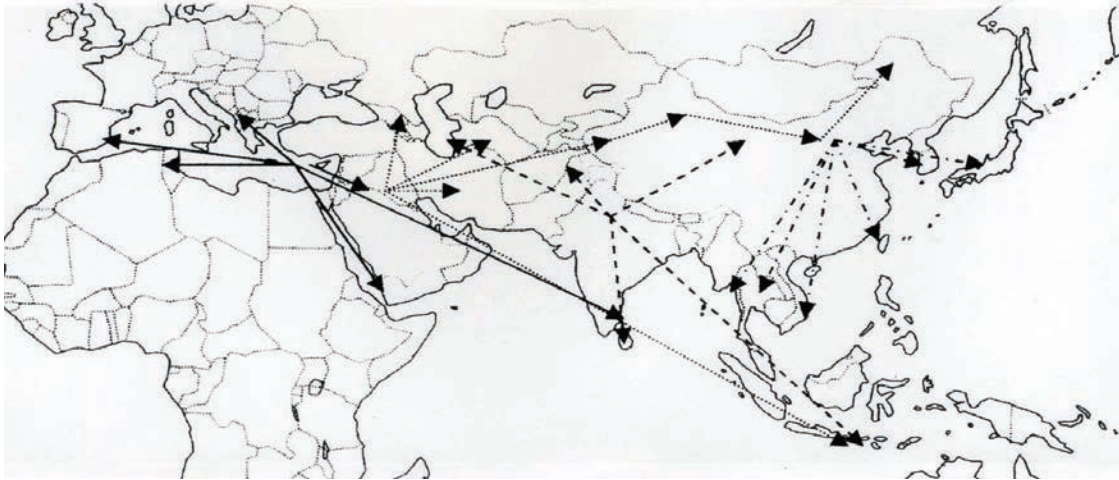


Indian Subcontinent,
Multiple Beaks



East Asia, Tube

Silk Road oil lamp characteristics and expansion



Cultural Sphere	Eastern Mediterranean	Central Asia	Indian Subcontinent	East Asia
Wick holding Structure	Pinched spout, tube, upright spout	Leather bag (horn), Open groove	Beak	Dish, weight, tube
Expansion	—————→→	-----→	- - - - -→

12. Final Notes

Perhaps because of the differing nature of the fuel and the lamp's poor value for trade beyond the desert region, there seems to have been little exchange of oil lamps between the Mediterranean and Yellow River civilizations beyond the western region.

Religious scriptures and important poetic paintings were left behind during the pre-lighting oil lamp period of about 4,500 years. Then, the major principles and theories of physics, chemistry, mathematics, astronomy, and medicine were also discovered, and the light of an oil lamp was used as a carrier of peaceful local culture at that time. I believe that lamp was one of which contributed to the birth of modern civilizations.

I have tried to include as many documents and publications as I can do the best of my ability.

However, I have put together this report with some my own imaginations and interpretations as there are many things that are still unclear to me.

My hope is that one day, someone will generously help me uncover the truths.

March 2012, Shigeo Sasaki

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Kobe Lamp Museum, Kobe, Kobe
Akari no Yakata (House of Light), Kure, Hiroshima
Kyushu Energy Center, Fukuoka, Fukuoka
British Museum, London
U.S. National Museum

Timeline of Shigeo Sasaki (11th generation of the Sasaki family)

- 1925 Sasaki Shigeo was born
- 1938 Graduated from Tsubaki Nishi Elementary School
- 1943 Graduated from Hagi Junior High School
- 1945 Graduated from Yamaguchi High School under the old school system
- 1948 Graduated from Kyushu University. Joined Ube Industries, Ltd.
- 1951 Shigeo and Yasuko got married
- 1952 The first son was born
- 1954 His father Chujiro passed
- 1956 Birth of the second son
- 1958 First overseas trip to New Zealand
- 1970 Published “Yorokobi”, a collection of songs dedicated to his mother Shizuko
- 1774 Built a new ube house for my mother’s medical treatment
- 1980 eldest son got married
- 1984 Second son got married
- 1990 His mother passed
- 1991 He retired as Senior Managing Director of Ube Industries Ltd.
And became President of Ube Chemical Industries Ltd.
- 1995 Retired from President of Ube Chemical Industries
- 1999 Began contributing to the Journal of Studies “ Lamp of the Far North”
- 2002 “Silk Road lamp” was published on Ube Nichi Shinbun, New Year’s Day edition
- 2003 His Lamp collection was featured on RKB radio and KRY TV
- 2006 Sponsored the National Cultural Festival
“Light on the Silk Road” exhibition at the Yamaguchi Museum,
It was featured on TYS TV
- 2009 8 copies of the first edition of Lamps on the Silk Roads were printed
- 2019 100 copies of Lamps on the Silk Roads photo book were printed
- 2019 August 19 Shigeo 94, his wife Yasuko 89, 2 children, 5 grandchildren
and 4 great-grandchildren to date

Crowdfunding “Light on the Silk Roads” publication supporters

Kunio Hashimori, Akiko Yamamoto, Tatsuo Shii, Yoshio Hironaka, Hirofumi Mitsunaga, Yuji Watanabe, Michiho Hara, Kikuo Fukuda, Yasuko Sasaki

Hiroshi Watanabe I empathize with his passion and commitment to lamps, and I support him from the bottom of my heart.

Setsuko Fujimoto I was fascinated by Sesshu, and I longed for the Silk Roads, where I believe his roots lie.

Seiji Sasaki The journey of our distant ancestors overlaps with that of our own.

Junko Sasaki Every time I look at the photographs, I feel the passage of time through eternity.

Yosuke Sasaki It was a pleasure to travel with you.

Kenji Sasaki I learned that daily life and culture are inseparable.

Shinji Yamamoto My curiosity is stimulated intellectually by the world of lamps for the first time in my life.

Aya Yamamoto The long history of lamps gives me a sense of wanderlust.

Kazuo Sasaki A remarkable book that traces the long history of lamps.

Zujun Zhang 100 Years of Life! He made “my story” come true.

Translated and edited by **Shizuka Sasaki**

(Titles omitted, in no particular order)

Special thanks to all of you.

This book is now ready to be published, and I’d like to thank everyone who has supported us through crowdfunding.

I would also like to thank the many other supporters who were not named above.

Naohiko Sasaki

【Author Bio.】

Shigeo Sasaki

1925 Born in Ube City, Yamaguchi Prefecture

1948 Graduated from Kyushu University and joined Ube Industries, Ltd.

1991 Retired from Senior Managing Director of Ube Industries

1995 Retired as President of Ube Chemical Industries

He has been interested in lamps since he worked at the company, and his life's work has been to research lamps around the world.

He contributed "The Lamps of the Far North" and other articles to the Journal of the Study Group. Later on, he was featured on RKB radio and KRY TV in connection with lamps, and "The Lamp of the Silk Roads" at the Yamaguchi Museum was featured on TYS TV.

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