Saddam linked himself with Assyrian, Babylonian, and Abu-salih rulers, subsuming a humble originary genealogies. Bricks used in his megalomaniacal restoration of Babylon are stamped with his name, and a large inscription states that the city was begun by Nebuchadnezzar and completed by Saddam. Close identification with a single ruler can easily backfire once the ruler is removed.

The third factor that seems to have contributed to the looting of museums has to do with their origins under colonial rule and their persisting status as a colonialism in Iraq and other Arab countries. Most Arab museums still operate within an outmoded orientalist framework, displaying artifacts with lit- tle regard for local general audience or even specialists. My Danish colleague, Ingolf Thuesen, who conducted a survey of visitors to a regional museum in Hamma, Syria, noted that the museum was primarily visited by foreign tourists and government officials and rarely by the adult Syrian popula- tion. Most of the museum objects reflect the damage from looting in the aftermath of the 1982 bombard- ment of the city. By and large seen as symbols of the govern- ment, signs of privilege, and as ‘foreign’ institutions, one can understand why some Iraqis were willing to loot their muse- ums and cultural institutions.

The Laws of Antiquities governing the excavation, pos- session, and transaction of antiquities in Iraq and other Arab countries seem to foster this rupture between society and artistic culture, in two main ways. First, the overly stringent policies in these laws virtually ignore the existence of an art market or the age-old desire of some people, Iraqis includ- ed, to collect ancient objects. Whereas such policies prescribe an ideal situation, in reality they have contributed to the pro- liferation of an illegal art market. Second, by defining a pro- fected cultural artifact as 200 years or older, these laws val- orize the ancient over the more recent and cheapen the still palpable memory of the population.

Finally, I agree that a few well-placed tanks in front of Iraqi museums and libraries would have prevented or at least min- imized their looting. But in the end such security measures, whether by US or Iraqi forces, only serve to deepen the rupture and further disengage culture from the population. Rather, I would like us to look a little more proactively towards a future where cultural institutions are not only better pro- tected but also better integrated within their own societies. It is time, I think, to turn alienation into outreach, to devel- op the public and educational components of these muse- ums, following the example of European and especially American museums. Once Iraqis feel included in their own cultural patrimony, I suspect they will have second thoughts before looting.

Through the conceptual comp- lexity of kazari, both exhibition and catalogue make an attempt to challenge the conventions of current art-histori- cal discourse which, as Rousmaniere says, ‘has tended to categorise the arts according to an evident form, such as ‘visual arts’ or ‘applied arts’. This exhibition seeks to break down such conven- tional boundaries between artistic forms, even between arts as apparent- ly different as painting and music, with the aim of presenting the ‘social life’ of artefacts, and to show them in the con- text of what Rousmaniere calls a ‘larg- er artistic programme’ (p. 21). For example, the exhibition not only included high-quality hanging scrolls and painted screens, which would tradi- tionally be classified as high art, but also spectacularly shaped parade hel- mets and skillfully decorated musical instruments, objects that would usual- ly be considered applied art.

The exhibition is arranged in six them- eatic sections, each centring on what are considered to be the six highpoints of kazari. The first section deals with display in the reception rooms of the fif- teenth- and sixteenth-century elite; the second with the exuberant style of the early seventeenth- and eight- teenth-century samurai; the third introduces the taste for finery and splendour of late seventeenth- and eigh- teenth-century merchants; the fourth presents the glories of high-cast hindu women of the eighteenth and nine- teenth centuries; the fifth takes us to the pleasure quarters of the late eight- teenth and nineteenth centuries; and the last section explores festivals of the pre-modern period, with their colour- ful floats and costumes.

The question to be answered is whether the exhibition is successful in changing the way we look at Japanese art, as its organizers claim it will be. It goes without saying that the exhibits are immensely engaging, but are they shown in such a way that we do indeed see the objects as part of a larger artistic programme, and get a notion of their usage in every sense – what Rous- maniere claims the exhibition is all about?

In fact, it is only in the first section that the visitor can experience some- thing of ‘kazari in action’. In large showcases, reconstructions are made of the decorative arrangements in Muromachi period reception rooms. Hanging scrolls, screens, and small decorative objects are put together as they might have been in a sixteenth- century interior. The result is striking. However, hardly any other attempts are made to present an ensemble in this manner. Contemporary etiquette man- uals, pattern books, and illustrations are called upon to provide a context, but kinoko mats and accessories, screens, small articles of furniture, and ceram- ics are still mostly displayed in separate cases, and are treated individually in the catalogue. There are no clashes of textures and materials, no three-dimen- sional confrontations. There may well have been practical reasons (such as conflicting conservation requirements) for not putting objects together, but after the promise of the first section one does expect more of an attempt to show items in ensembles.

The catalogue follows the layout of the exhibition. Articles accompanying the first five sections were written by Kawai Masatomo, John Carpenter, Yasumura Toshinobu, Nagasaki Iwao, and Timothy Clark respectively. The section on festivals has no accompany- ing essay – there is instead an article on the vocabulary of ‘decoration’ in early modern Japan by Tamamushi Satoko. Each contribution shows fine scholarship, and the descriptions and inscriptions of the indi- vidual exhibits, provided by a range of contributors, are highly informative. Much information is brought together here that cannot be found in any other English-language publication. It is the catalogue, more than the exhibition itself, which draws our attention not only to the objects and their display, but also to the quality of the workmanship, but also to an object’s use, its place within the dis- play of ornament and good taste, and

the many allusions to the canon of art and literature, which brings in the ele- ment of play and parody. Despite the careful labelling of exhibits, the unini- mitated visitor who does not read the cat- alogue will have little appreciation of the supposedly revolutionary nature of ‘entirely fresh interpretation’ or ‘new thinking’ of the exhibition, and will only be able to have seen a series of showcases displaying very appealing objects. This is an exhibition that needs the catalogue to make its point.

In spite of these misgivings this exhi- bition is of innovative value: both exhibi- tion and catalogue are representative of a perceptible trend in the study of art history (and also in other areas) that encourages scholars to move away from exclusive thinking, break down bound- aries, and be more aware of interrelat- edness, multifariousness, ambiguity, and ambivalence. Objects really are pre- sented in context, even if one has to read the catalogue to fully appreciate this point, and traditional boundaries are negated. Even a few ‘ephrasemal objects’, as Rousmaniere calls them, such as a wrapping cloth, a decorated lantern, or an incense wrapper are included. This integrative approach comes from application of the concept of kazari. When ideas are represented on such an impressive scale and at such a high level of scholarship, as is the case with the Kazari exhibition, they are sure to have an impact, even if it takes time for partition walls to fall and long-stand- ing art-historical considerations to be challenged. Perhaps in a few years’ time we will be able to see all the finery of fashionable eighteenth-century ladies presented in one showcase, together with elements of the interiors in which they lived their lives.


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Anna Beerens

Kazari

Tsui Nobuo introduced kazari as a central concept in the study of Japanese art about fifteen years ago and has been developing the idea ever since. The basic meaning of the verb kazari is ‘to decorate, to adorn’. It can also be used in the form of ‘to exhibit’, ‘to put on show’. Finally, kazari involves the idea of ‘being affected’, as in kazanke, ‘affection or showiness’. Thus, kazari stands for decor, decoration, the decorated and the decorative, and for the proper way of handling and appreciating it all. In pre-modern Japan, the kazari has led to objects and ensembles of objects being used for purposes of play and display.

By Anna Beerens

Kazari

Visual presentation of a 15th-century Interior

As a follow-up to this issue, the newsletter would like to publish your com- ments and experiences regarding the recent looting of cultural institutions in Iraq. Please send your comments of 100 words or less to the art & cultures edi- tor, Krisy Phillips philis31@umass.edu