



*Ryûkyû koten-yaki*

琉球古典焼



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## Terminological Aspects

Pottery, earthenware: 陶器, 焼物 (*rk.* ヤチムン)

Unglazed pottery 荒焼 / Glazed pottery 上焼

***Ryûkyû koten yaki*** 琉球古典焼: literally “Ancient (or traditional) pottery of Ryûkyû”

- A creation of the Taishô era

- A term invented to target art and curio dealers 骨董店, 古道具屋

Other designations:

- ***Kuroda yaki*** 黒田焼
- ***Ejiputo moyô/aya*** エジプト模様／綾 (Why ?)
- ***Koshoku*** 古色 (A prevalent designation in the Taishô era, Shima Jôga)
- ***Ryûkyû yaki*** 琉球焼
- ***Nanban yaki*** 南蛮焼
- ***Ryûkyû Nanban*** 琉球南蛮
- ***Uruma moyô*** ウルマ模様
- ***Chôtarô yaki*** 長太郎焼 (黒釉)
  
- ***Tsuboya yaki*** 壺屋焼, a more encompassing designation, preferred to *kotenyaki* by some contemporary potters



Ornamental plates (額皿 *gaku-zara*, 飾り皿 *kazari-zara*), Ryûkyû kotenyaki style  
Baron Guy Fain Collection, Paris Musée de l'homme (now Musée du quai Branly)  
Naha 1939, probably given to Baron Fain by Baron Shô Jun 尚順男爵, 4th son of King Shô Tai













- Professor Tonaki Akira 渡名喜明, former Museum of Man, Paris, January 1999 -

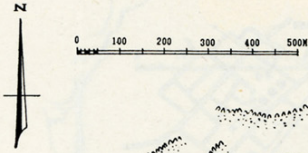


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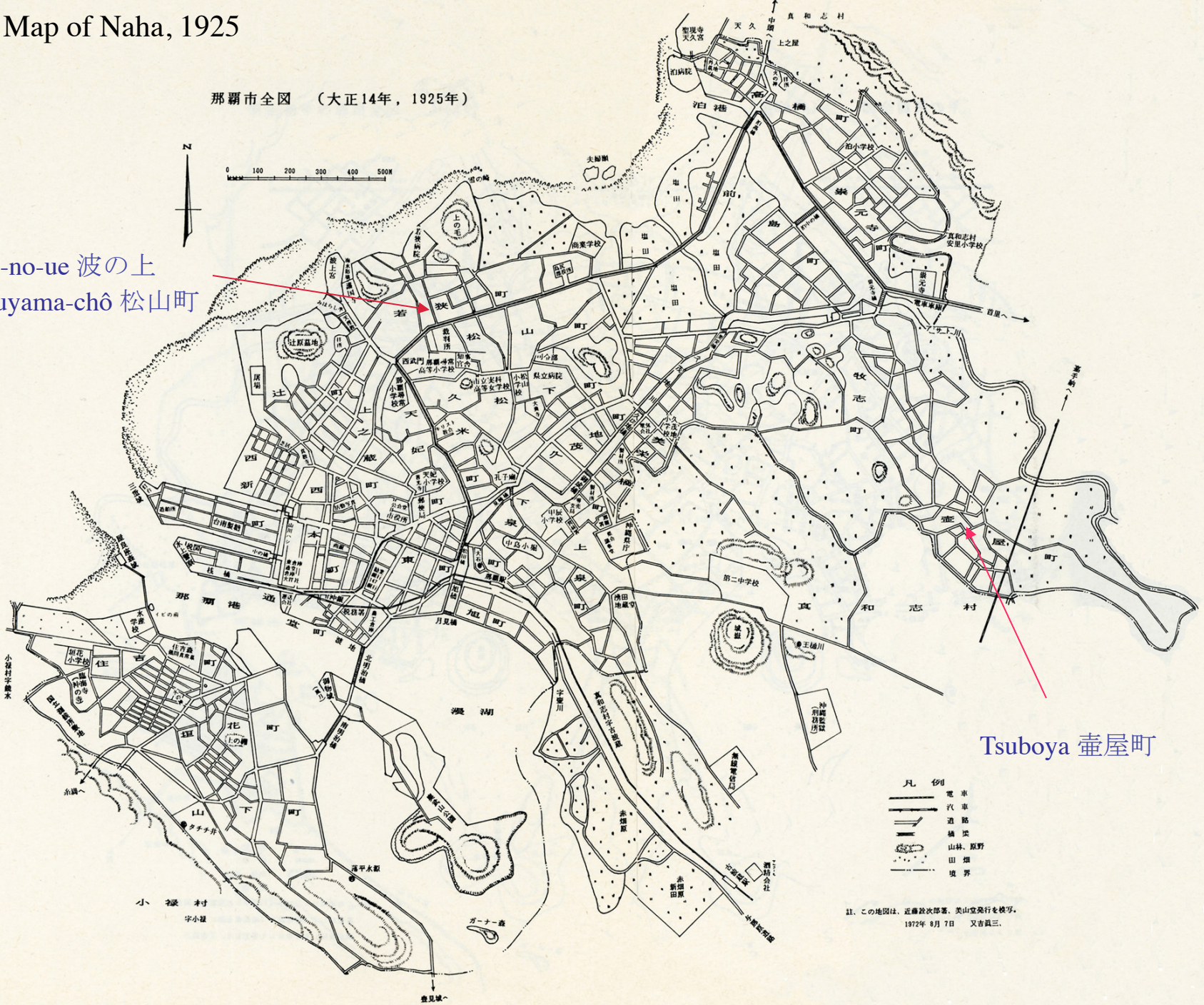
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# Map of Naha, 1925

那覇市全図 (大正14年, 1925年)



Nami-no-ue 波の上  
Matsuyama-chô 松山町



Tsuboya 壺屋町

凡 例

- 電車
- 汽車
- 道路
- 橋梁
- 山林、原野
- 田畑
- 境界

註、この地図は、近藤政次郎著、美山堂発行を模写。  
1972年 8月 7日 又吉風三。



**Tsuboya 壺屋**, a district of workshops and kilns (釜) located on the periphery of Naha before WWII, consisting of 7 “houses”, or *nagachine*. It was founded in 1682, by order of the royal government, from the merging of kilns previously located in Wakuta, Chibana and Takaraguchi.

The production of pottery (fired or baked at 1200-1300°) in Okinawa would not have started before the 15th century with the construction of kilns in Chibana and Kina (*Nanban yaki*). Prior to that time, only earthenwares (800°) were locally produced, pottery was imported from China, South-East Asia, Korea and Japan.

Potters from Satsuma (Korean influence) were invited to Okinawa in the 17th century for the purpose of improving the quality of the local production; techniques were also borrowed from China. Two types of products: *ara-yaki* 荒焼, *jô-yaki* 上焼.

*Kiryû shônin* 寄留商人, “merchants temporarily resident” in Okinawa:

Art and curio dealers, but also potters, originating from other prefectures (県外出身) settled in Naha in the late Meiji and Taishô eras.

Among those: **Kuroda**, Yasuda, Yamashita, Aoki, Tanaka, Ninomiya (from Kagoshima), Sawada (who often visited China)...

Merchants sponsored the production and exported it to Hondo.

The potters received support from the governor, the prefecture officials and the local elite for their contribution to the improvement of Okinawa's economy.



- Pottery market, Taishô era -

(Earl Rankin Bull Collection, Ryûkyû University)





## Kuroda & sons 黒田・家/一門/一族

**Kuroda Ribean (Shôjirô) 黒田理平庵 (庄次郎) 1870-1957**

長男

Kuroda Kochû (**Kanzaburô**, Ryûribe, Kinsaku)  
黒田壺中 (幹三郎, 琉理平, 金作) 1896-1982

次男

Kuroda Eiji (**Yokichi**, Hakuin)  
黒田英氏 (与吉, 白隠)

三男

Kuroda U-no-matsu  
黒田卯の松

四男

Ôta Tamotsu  
太田保

# Kuroda Ribean



新垣製陶所で作陶にはげむ黒田理平庵（中央）

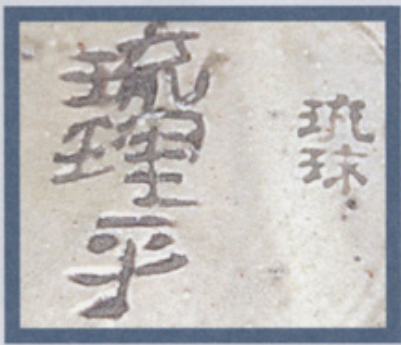


## Individual Profiles of the Kuroda Family

- **Kuroda Ribean**: born in 1857 in Kashihara 橿原市 (Nara), adopted by the Kuroda family of Osaka, learns engraving with Ameoka Kinichi 天岡均一 in Osaka; he arrives in Naha at the beginning of Taishô era (1912?), perhaps prompted by a brother working in the sugar industry, and opens an art shop (美術店) in the Nami-no-ue district. He was at the same time a designer, a maker and a producer.
- **Kuroda Kochû** (壺 + 中, literally « In the jar »), Kanzaburô: born in 1896 in Ôsaka, where he attends school until the age of 16 (大阪第一中学校); thereafter he goes to live with his father in Nara Prefecture, in Yagi-chô, Kashihara-shi; he studies Japanese drawing with Honda in Ôsaka, then engraving with Ameoka Kinichi; he joins his father in Okinawa in 1916, accompanied by two of his brothers, Eiji et U-no-matsu. As a designer and a maker he held a central position in the family business.
- **Kuroda Eiji**: trained in drawing, he exhibits his work in Naha in 1924; in charge of marketing 営業; he is the only member of the Kuroda family who stayed in Okinawa after 1932; awarded in 1937.
- **Kuroda U-no-matsu**: in charge of marketing and the organization of displays in Hondo. Before the war, he owned a shop in Ôsaka (*Tatsuwa bijutsuten*), and after the war, two shops in Nara (Neiraku 寧楽 in Nobori-ôji 登大路, and Hôbôsô ? 畝傍荘 in Nishi-no-miya).
- **Ôta Tamotsu**: adopted by a Ôta family; he arrived in Okinawa in 1928 after he had completed his education at Fushimi kôtô gakkô (伏見高校) and learned the basics of pottery; he was responsible for overseeing the kilns and the firings in Tsuboya, drew motifs, and was involved in the packaging of the wares. He kept a detailed diary of his activities from 1929 on. In 1932 he returned to Nara where he worked for the Post Office; he continued to make pottery, but never visited Okinawa again.

Kuroda Kochû  
黒田壺中

榎原市の黒田家に残る、  
壺中の試作品



黒田理平庵の長男 壺中のスタジオ写真



榎原の作業場での黒田壺中

球陽壺山琉理平





太田 保の伏見高校での記念写真

Ôta Tamotsu 1





はにわを焼く伏見高校時代の太田保（奈良）

Ôta Tamotsu 2



左／黒田英氏の妻ツル  
中／黒田英氏  
右／太田 保（伏見高校生）

Kuroda Tsuru et Eiji, Ôta Tamotsu





新垣製陶所の庭先（太田保：後列右から2番目、金城次郎とヒゲ：後列右から4人目と5人目、石川先生：前列右、新垣榮徳：前列左）

In the garden of Arakaki Eitoku's workshop I





In the garden of Arakaki Eitoku's workshop II

奈良にあった黒田アートギャラリー



Kuroda Ribean's "art gallery" in Nara



琉球特産美術店



Kuroda Ribean's curio shop in Naha 琉球特産美術店





那覇市松山の家（昭和初期、太田保：右、黒田朝子：右から2番目）

Interior of Kuroda Ribean's house in the Matsuyama district, Naha

Although they invented and developed the *kotenyaki* style,  
the Kurodas were not the only designers in that style.

In Shima Jôga's recollection, there were also:

Kanagusuku Machû 金城マチュー of Shuri

Esumi 江隅, Tsuboya resident, originating from  
Tottori Prefecture

Nakagawa Isaku 中川伊作 (1899-2000), print  
engraver, graduate of the design school of Kyôto  
City, who moved to Tsuboya in 1928 (exhibition of  
his works in Kyôto, 1938, entitled 「南蛮雅陶」 )





## Socio-economic aspects of the *Ryûkyû koten-yaki* style

- During the Meiji era, Hondo/Naichi art dealers were attracted by the exoticism of Okinawa and of its *ara-yaki* 荒焼 style pottery, also known as *Nanban-yaki* 南蛮焼 from the Taishô era on.
- With their new aesthetic sensitivity, they opened the mainland market to Okinawa's pottery and thus partly overcame the decline of the local production that resulted from the importation of cheap products from Hondo (porcelain 磁器, lacquerware, enamelware) and the changes in the way of life that accompanied the integration of Okinawa in the Japanese Empire (and this, despite the improvement of Okinawan pottery by the introduction of cobalt glaze).
- Conjunction of the Kurodas' imagination and the technical skill of Tsuboya's craftsmen (especially the techniques of 上焼); close co-operation between the Kurodas and Arakaki Eitoku, the owner of a kiln. Kuroda Ribean introduces the "Egyptian motifs" — a designation that epitomizes various sorts of exotic figures — and launches the *koten-yaki* style and vogue, making Tsuboya a place of repute.
- Kuroda Ribean's artistic culture: his "avant-garde" approach is guided by a keen sense of the market evolution towards cosmopolitan themes and an interest in potteries made in China, Siam, Annam, Korea, or even Europe: as a matter of fact, the *koten-yaki* style strongly departs from Okinawan traditional pottery (外来趣味).
- Artistic "audacity" (大胆) gives free rein to exotic fantasies that meet an already existing demand for pieces of *Nanban* 南蛮 or *Shima-mono* 島物 style.
- Japanese expansion towards the "South seas" and Southeast Asia, with a strategic interest in the Middle-East.
- *Koten-yaki* wares are made by identifiable craftsmen in contrast with the mass-produced wares of Hondo; ornamental value takes precedence over functional utility, "*koten-yaki* introduces dream"

## A Flourishing Business

- The Kurodas' production, either direct or in partnership with other craftsmen, is estimated at about 200,000 pieces between the beginning of Taishô era and 1932.
- Ôta Tamotsu himself made up to 30 pieces a day (or watched over their production).
- The production was sold in stores at Ôsaka, Tôkyô, Kyôto, Hiroshima. A large sale took place at Hankyû department store in Umeda, Ôsaka.
- During his visit to Okinawa in 1921, the Crown Prince 皇太子 purchased *kotenyaki* style potteries.
- Civil servants originating from mainland Japan also contributed to the vogue of *kotenyaki* pottery in Hondo.
- In 1928 Kuroda Kochû (under the pseudonym 流古山) organized an exhibition in the Ginza Shiseidô art gallery 銀座資生堂 in Tôkyô, which was presented as a revival of “Ancient Ryûkyûan ceramics” 古琉球の南蛮焼復興.



Advertising leaflet for the display of Kuroda Kinsaku (*ie.* Kochû)'s ceramics

in Fujisawa Kureha 藤沢呉服's shop, September 1927

「黒田金作氏作 琉球陶器陳列即売会」



Then came Yanagi Muneyoshi... His scathing criticism of *kotenyaki* was to have a lasting impact on its perception by art specialists:

…だがこの「古典焼」なるものは實は今から十年ぐらみ前に、黒田と云ふ骨董商が計畫し、それが偶々當つたと云ふまで、**殆ど琉球の特色はない**。今では手法や技術などには、見るべき點があるまでに發達してはきたが、併し模様の題材が琉球とは縁が薄く、且つ**裝飾がいつも過剰で醜いものが多い**。特に安ものは、あとで着色したりするので、一層いかものゝ感じがする。とにかく傳統的な沖繩のものではなく、**外来趣味が多く**、沖繩の焼物史の中で、寧ろ**瀆れた一章**を残すものと云つていゝ。「古典焼」で現在の壺屋を見るのは**氣の毒である**。

Yanagi Muneyoshi 柳宗悦, *Ryūkyū no tōki* 『琉球の陶器』 昭和書房, 1942年 (pp. 187-188)

Yanagi Muneyoshi, the figurehead of *Mingei-undō* 民藝運動, visited Tsuboya four times between December 1938 and July 1940. He was guided by Hamada Shōji 濱田庄司, a ceramist of Tsuboya, originating from Kanagawa, who came for the first time to Okinawa in 1918, along with Kawai Kanjirō, one of the founders of *Mingei-undō*. Hamada had been working for some time in Arakaki Eitoku's workshop.





In spite of Yanagi Muneyoshi's expert opinion, *kotenyaki* style wares were also to become *mingei*...

On the plates of the Baron Guy Fain Collection, one thus reads:

“*Mingei Ryûkyû tokusan kan saku*” 民藝 琉球特産館作

値札 30 ¥, 100 ¥, 210 ¥

In the second half of the 1930s, some potters and merchants started to commercialize the *kotenyaki* wares under the label *mingei* 民藝, “(traditional) folkcraft”, a designation that should only sanction the artistic quality of everyday — functional — objects (工芸品) from the standpoint of Yanagi Muneyoshi and the *Mingei-undô* followers 民藝運動

For the *Mingei-undô*, beauty and function cannot be separated: notion of 「用の美」





## General features of the *kotenyaki* style designs



- Figurative designs expressing the lure of the South seas, of tropical lands, of the “Orient” ...  
「南島らしい図柄」 「熱帯植物など南洋風のデザイン」
- Exoticization of Okinawa, doorstep to the South  
“Okinawa’s exotic appeal” 「沖縄のエキゾチックな魅力」
- “It looks like manga...” 「漫画っぽい」 says a contemporary collector living in Hondo
- Clay sculpting
- Wealth of vivid and gaudy colors (どぎつい, 渋い)
- Shima Jôga: 《反対する人がいて「ペンキだ、ペンキだ」と陰口をたたく》
- Use of paint and coating (塗り, 塗料, 顔料), colors are sometimes applied after the baking (as for the plates of the Baron Guy Fain Collection)



## *Kotenyaki* techniques 古典焼の技法

- *uki-bori* 浮き彫り (relief carving)
- *hori-kizami* 掘り刻み (digging and carving)
- *fuka-bori* 深彫り (deep carving)
- *sukashi-hori* 透(かし)彫り (openwork carving)
- *kaki-otoshi* 掻き落とし (scraping off the mud)
- *kezuri-tori* 削り取り (shaving off)
- *hari-tsuki* 貼り付き (pasting up)
- *mori-tsuki* (*takkwasâ*) 盛り付き
- *abura-fuki* 油拭き
- *yûkake* 釉掛け (spreading the glaze)
- *ibushi-gake* 燻し掛け (fumigation)
- *gosai* 後彩 (post-firing coloring)



## *Kotenyaki* techniques 古典焼の技法



縹色に唐草文花立 (高さ28cm)

Many of the techniques employed to make *kotenyaki* potteries were already known to Tsuboya craftsmen before Meiji, although not ordinarily used (such as for funerary urns 遺骨壺).

Some would have been introduced during the Taisho era: *kaki-otoshi* 掻き落とし (scraping), *hari-tsuki* 貼り付き (sticking, pasting), *mori-tsuki* (*takkwasâ*) 盛り付き (application of colours after the firing)





## Motifs - Designs

模様・文様・紋様・文・図柄



- *Ejiputo moyô* エジプト模様 / 文様 / 風 (more likely Persian or Assyrian)
- *tobi uo* 飛び魚, *hôô* 鳳凰
- *zô* 象, *uma* 馬
- *ryû* 龍, *tatsumaki* 竜巻
- *shishi/shisâ* 獅子, *shishi botan* 獅子牡丹
- *gunkan* 軍艦, *shinkôsen* 進貢船, *kara-bune* 唐船, *takara-bune* 宝船
- *Okinawa no sansui mon* 沖縄の山水紋
- *bashô* 芭蕉, *budô* 葡萄
- *karakusa moyô* 唐草模様 (arabesques)
  - Evolution towards motifs more characteristic of Okinawa?
  - Degeneration after the Kurodas left Okinawa (lack of a “leader” )?



エジプト模様 (笛を吹く兵士) “Egyptian” and “Horn blower” motifs







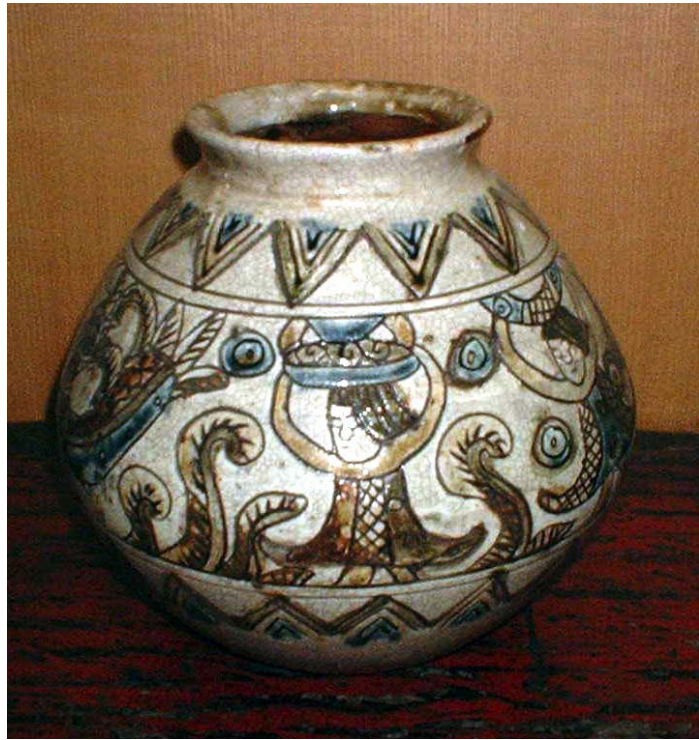
# エジプト文様



エジプト文







## Head-carriage motif

荷物を頭上運搬する女性の模様









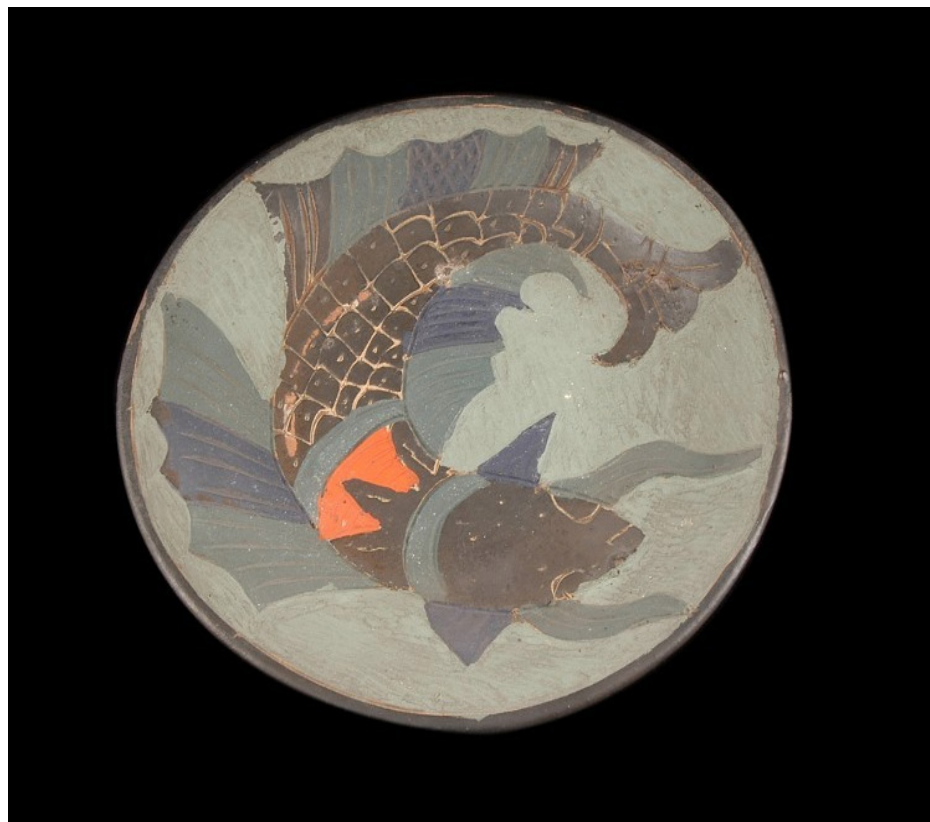






緑釉掛けエジプト文灰釉掻落し大壺（高さ37cm）





飛び魚 Flying fish

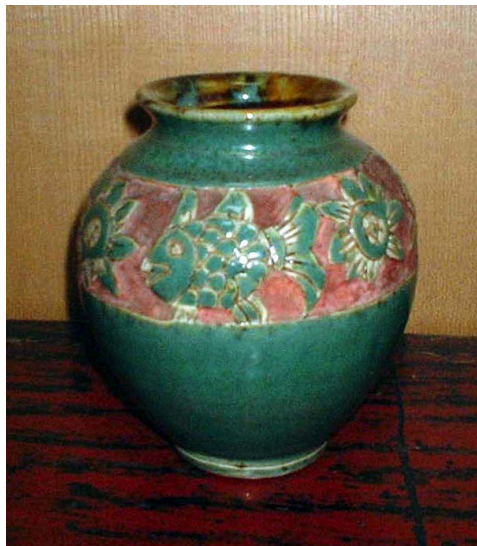


魚









魚







蟹 Crab



鳳凰  
Phoenix











鳳凰

Shima Joga 島常賀, *ca.* 1935





赤絵

Tsuboya Museum of Ceramics  
壺屋焼物博物館

Kuranari Taro 倉成多郎 15-12-2007

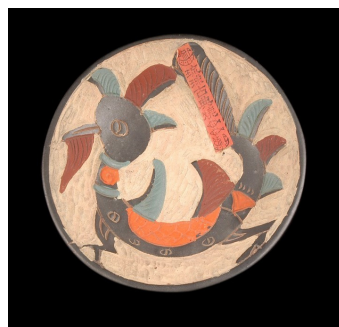




# 鳳凰 Phoenix



マンガン釉掻落し鳥文後彩花器 (高さ24cm)











象 Elephant













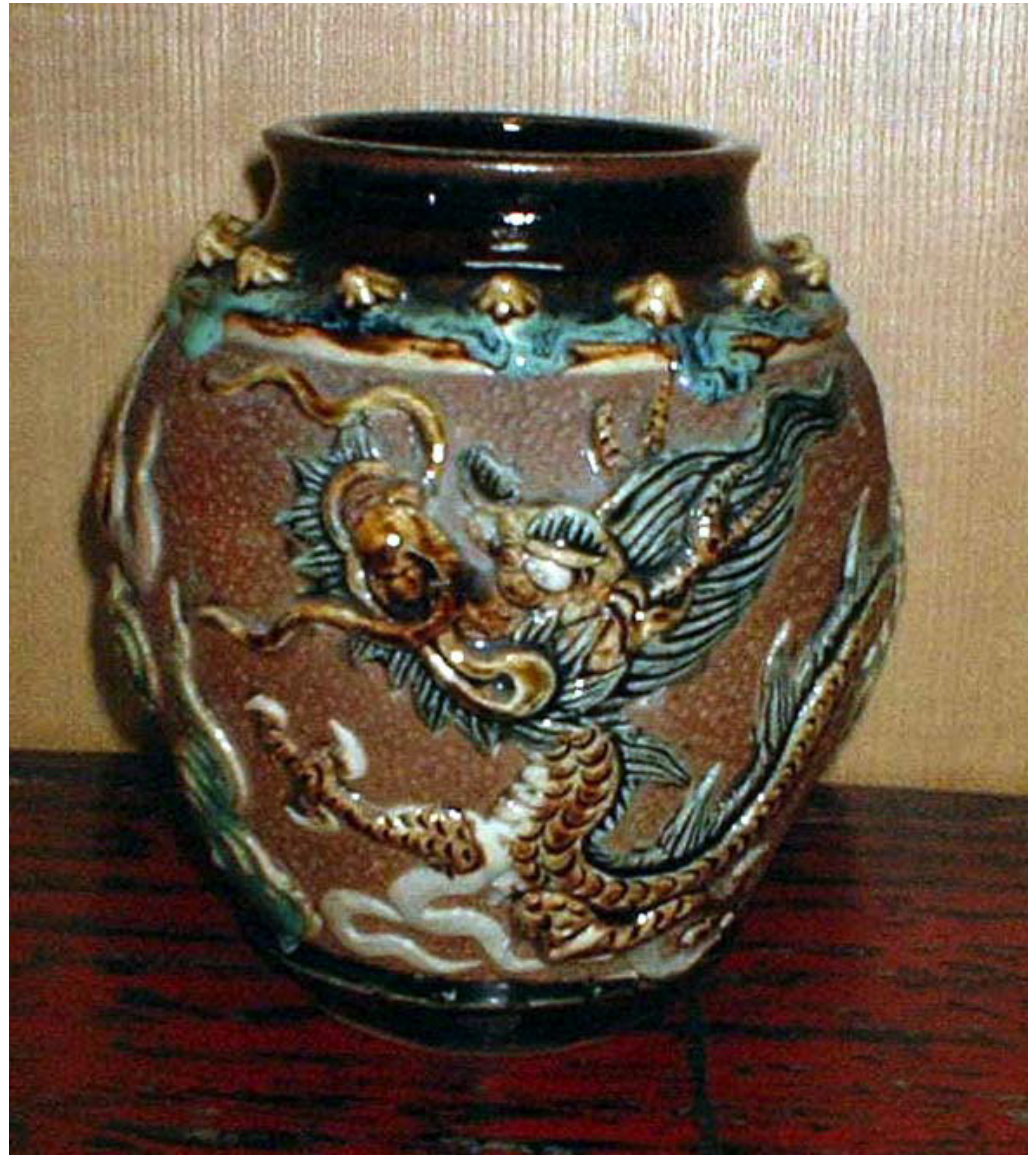
Caparisoned horse 着飾った(軍)馬











龍 *Ryu* “Dragon”













軍艦・宝船・進貢船 *gunkan, takara-bune, shinkosen* ?



















Baron Guy Fain Collection, Naha, 1939







Shima Joga 島常賀

Kuroda Kinsaku 黒田金作

船のスケッチ・金作







Shima Jôga 島常賀, ca. 1935





Shima Jōga 島常賀 ?







マンガン釉掻落し船文徳利（高さ14cm）

帆船





蘇鉄 *sotetsu*



緑釉掛け植物文染付け掻落し花器（高さ26.5cm）













芭蕉 Banana tree















豚か獅子か Pig or Shishi/Shisa ?



緑釉巻初殻釉掻落し花文花器 (高さ17.5cm)





釉掛け *yûkake*







Itô Mineko Collection (Shimabukuro Jômei?)



# Kinjo Jiro 金城次郎 (1912-2004)

1985:重要無形文化財「琉球陶器」技術の保持者  
(人間国玉)

Before the war, Kinjo Jiro worked with Arakaki Eitoku

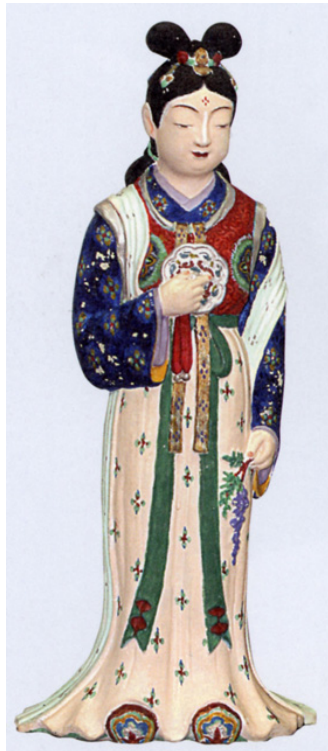
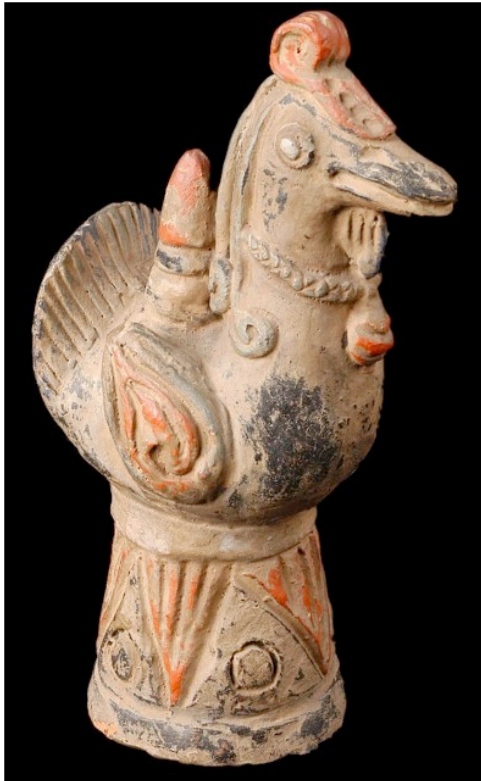


「笑う魚」





*Haniwa* 埴輪 and statuettes





終