

Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you so much for coming, and my thanks to John and Tokiko for this opportunity to be involved in this exhibition. It is an absolute privilege to have my first co-curatorial effort be here in Hawaii, and on Ryukyuan topics, and a real pleasure to be back here in Hawaii, if only for a few days.

Professor Szostak has already touched upon some of the other works in the exhibition. I would like to take a few minutes to talk about the two scroll paintings depicting Ryukyuan embassies in procession. We can only say so much on the cards, the gallery labels, in the exhibit, so I thought that today I would share a little more of what I discovered in researching these works.

#### SLIDE TWO

When an embassy from the Ryukyu Kingdom traveled up to Edo, it visited the shogun's castle two or three times. Each time they went up to the castle, the ambassadors and their entourage of roughly 70 to 170 members of the Ryukyuan scholar-aristocracy paraded through the streets of Edo, wearing impressive court costume, carrying colorful banners, and playing Ryukyuan music. The spectacle was recorded in scroll paintings like the two we have on display in the exhibit, of which roughly 100 are extant today. Over the course of the 17<sup>th</sup>-early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, numerous woodblock printed books about Ryukyu were published as well, roughly 90 titles in all, each of which might have been published in initial print runs of as many as one or two thousand copies. We are extremely fortunate to have here in the Sakamaki-Hawley Collection numerous copies of those books as well.

#### SLIDE THREE

To return to the subject of the scrolls, in our exhibition, we have a short scroll depicting the 1671 procession, which we are fortunate to be able to show in its entirety, and a longer scroll, depicting the 1710 procession, sixty feet long when fully unrolled, of which we sadly can only show a brief portion.

But, then, handscroll paintings were never meant to be unrolled or viewed all at once anyway. Unlike hanging scrolls, prints, or framed paintings, which might be hung up on a wall for all to see, viewing a handscroll was, traditionally, a more personal, private, and intimate experience. You were meant to unroll it only a few feet at a time, starting on the right, viewing just one segment, and then rolling up the right side and unrolling the left side, again, only a few feet at a time. In this way, it replicates, or evokes, somewhat, the experience of watching a parade pass by. I invite you when you take a look at the exhibit, to focus in on one section of each scroll, taking it in as if it were the only section visible, before moving on to the next section, allowing the events to unfold before you, one section at a time, rather than, or in addition to, trying to take it all in at once.

Sadly, we do not know who painted these two scrolls, for whom, for what purpose, or how often or on what sort of occasions the scrolls would have been taken out and opened up. However, scholars write that some scrolls were created as official pictorial records of these events, while others may have been commissioned from a painter by an interested wealthy client, or, perhaps, painted by a painter who afterwards sought a customer to sell it to. Scrolls such as these might have served as souvenirs for those who witnessed the processions and wished to have a keepsake, or they may have served as a replacement, the next best thing for those who were unable to see the procession in person. Ryukyu was a very popular subject during those times when the embassies passed through the city, and there were surely many people interested in paintings such as these for just the same reasons we are – as stepping-off points for understanding something more about Ryukyu, and, especially in 17<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup>

century Japan, where seeing a foreigner was an exceedingly rare experience, scroll paintings such as these would have provided an exciting glimpse into a foreign culture.

#### SLIDE FOUR

I'm now going to take us through some highlights of the two scrolls.

The 1671 scroll opens with two rows of samurai, serving as escorts for the Ryukyuan embassy. We can clearly recognize them as samurai because of their pointy-shouldered *kataginu* over-robos, skirt-like *hakama* trousers, and the black lines on the painting representing the swords at their belts.

Next, we see four figures in long-sleeved robes which extend down nearly to the ground. We can tell by these robes, by their court caps, called *hachimaki*, and by their beards, that these are not samurai, but Ryukyuan aristocrats. Some sources indicate that the long red staffs carried by the two on the right may have been Chinese-style gunpowder weapons, or small fireworks devices, made from long sections of bamboo, and called *hiyaa*, meaning "fire arrows." That said, a travel diary by Kyoto-based physician Tachibana Nankei, who traveled to Kagoshima in 1782-1783, describes long red bamboo staffs being used to hold back the crowds or to push onlookers out of the way, in order to make way for the procession.

In any case, the figures behind them, as you can see, are carrying fringed banners depicting a tiger and a dragon. It may not seem like much, but in Japan, where banners are typically fringeless and relatively simple in design and style, these would have likely seemed quite exotic and elaborate.

#### SLIDE FIVE

After two Ryukyuan officials on horseback, we come to a group of musicians, again wearing Ryukyuan robes and Ryukyuan *hachimaki* court caps. They're playing a variety of instruments, including drums bearing the *mitsu-domoe* crest of the royal family of Ryukyu, which looks kind of like a three-part yin-yang, or three teardrops swirling around in a circle; other figures are playing instruments which look like long trumpets, but which are probably shawms, or charumera, a reed instrument more closely related to the oboe. None of the musicians marching in the procession are playing the sanshin, the three-stringed banjo-like instrument most strongly associated with Okinawan music, so their music could not have resembled the Okinawan music we are familiar with today, but, whatever it sounded like, it was presumably rather exotic for Japanese ears at the time.

#### SLIDE SIX

Two figures carrying halberds or spears, and two carrying banners emblazoned with the phrase "golden drum," herald the appearance of the Lead Envoy, the Chief Ambassador, or *seishi*, of the 1671 embassy. The ambassador, Prince Kin, rides in a palanquin carried by eight samurai, and wears Chinese court costume in the style of the Ming Dynasty, a symbol of his elite cultural identity, and that of the Ryukyu Kingdom as a whole, associating it with China, the great source of civilization in the region.

#### SLIDE SEVEN

Five figures following the Lead Envoy on horseback also wear black, winged Ming-style court caps, likewise representing or symbolizing the association with refined, elite culture.

Lastly, we have a series of figures in brightly colored robes, wearing not Chinese court caps, nor *hachimaki*, but with their hair up in buns, secured with fancy golden hairpins. These are teenage boys called *gakudôji*, who served as dancers and entertainers. After the procession arrived inside the

shogun's castle, they might play music and sing, or dance, as part of performances to entertain the shogun and his men.

The scroll closes out with several more groups of samurai escorts, which I am not showing here.

#### SLIDE EIGHT

Alongside that scroll, depicting the 1671 mission to Edo, we have laid out one depicting the 1710 mission, just under forty years later. The procession follows much the same format as what we saw in the 1671 scroll, so you will see many of the same elements, in much the same order. In fact, much of the organizational forms of this 1710 mission became standards followed by all the remaining missions of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. If we were to look at scrolls depicting the 1757 mission, or the 1832 mission, for example, we would find a great many similarities in the style of the banners, the number of halberds or spears being carried, the order in which figures appear, and so on.

The section I selected to show in the exhibit opens with a group of musicians and flag-bearers, like those we saw in the 1671 scroll.

#### SLIDE NINE

They are followed by a riderless horse, identified by the inscriptions as being a horse to be presented, that is, to be given as a gift or as tribute. Several of the smaller islands to the south of Okinawa, including Yonaguni and Miyako, still today boast their own distinctive breeds of small, stocky horses; both China and Japan regularly requested horses as tribute goods from Ryukyu.

The mounted figure next in the procession after the gift horse is the head groom, or horse steward, responsible for overseeing the embassy's horses. Like all the other prominent figures in the scroll, he is identified by an inscription above his head, giving both his role in the procession – head groom, or *gyoshi* – and his aristocratic title, Makiya peechin. No one in the scroll is identified by a true given or family name, but only by aristocratic title. Such labels were quite typical in paintings, prints, and illustrated books depicting the processions; some works include many more labels than this scroll does, identifying as well the musical instruments, banners, weapons, and the like, adding to the ability of the work to function for the viewer as a guide to the various sights comprising the procession.

#### SLIDE TEN

The next figure on horseback we see is identified as a *shokanshi*, or secretary. He would have been responsible for all the documents associated with the embassy, including formal letters from the King of Ryukyu to be presented to the shogun, as well as letters from the shogun formally received by the ambassadors, to be presented to the King upon their return.

Note that he's wearing the same kind of black, winged court cap, in the Chinese style, that some of the figures in the 1671 scroll were wearing. In fact, nearly all of the mounted Ryukyuan officials in this 1710 scroll are wearing Ming Dynasty court costume, rather than Ryukyuan robes and *hachimaki*. Beginning with this 1710 mission, it became standard for more of the officials in the embassies to wear Ming costume, again, a symbol of their connections to the elite culture of the Chinese Imperial Court.

We can also see that the secretary is wearing a sort of badge or patch on his chest; figures in the 1671 mission may have been wearing these as well, though they are not easily visible in the scroll. This sort of chest badge is called a *buzi* in Chinese. The creature embroidered onto it, along with the color or other aspects of the pattern, were used as symbols of the wearer's court rank within the Chinese court.

## SLIDE ELEVEN

Moving on from the secretary, we finally come to the first of two Lead Envoys, or Chief Ambassadors, heralded by a large red umbrella. In the 1671 scroll, we saw the procession of roughly 70 men from Ryukyu, the entourage of a single Chief Ambassador, Prince Kin. As was mentioned earlier today, missions were sent from Ryukyu both on the occasion of a new King taking the throne in Ryukyu, and on the occasion of a new Shogun taking command in Edo. In 1710, there was both a new King, and a new Shogun, and so a double-mission was sent, with two Lead Envoys, two Vice-Envoys, and an entourage of nearly 170 men.

Prince Misato, who we see here, is one of two Lead Envoys depicted in this scroll; Prince Tomigusuku, who follows a short distance behind him, is depicted almost identically. Both ride in lavish Chinese-style palanquins, or sedan chairs, lacquered or painted a bright vermillion, and elevated above the poles used to carry them. The Vice-Envoys, or Deputy Ambassadors, are sadly not visible in the section we have open in the gallery, but they ride, by contrast, in Japanese-style palanquins, which hang below the carrying poles.

## SLIDE TWELVE

So far, we have been talking about the content of the scrolls – who and what is actually depicted. In the last few minutes of my talk, I'd like to switch gears, and touch upon the style of these scrolls – that is, how they were painted. Comparing our scroll to another one, by a different artist, depicting the same event, and painted around very much the same time, can help us see the range of styles in which Ryukyu procession scrolls were painted.

Here is Yoza ueekata, one of the Vice-Envoys, or Deputy Ambassadors, on the 1710 mission, riding in a Japanese-style palanquin, just a couple of feet further down in the scroll beyond what we were able to

show in the gallery. We can see here how the artist used fine black lines to outline forms, as he does throughout the scroll, and to provide details such as describing the folds of the figures' garments. These have a wonderful calligraphic quality to them, growing thicker and thinner as the brush moves through each stroke, resembling and evoking a connection with the brushstrokes of the calligraphic inscription just above.

The details, such as in the figures' faces, are pretty minimal, and, for example, their swords are each indicated merely by a single thin line of black. As for colors, for the most part, the anonymous artist uses solid fields of color. Each figure's robe is simply a single solid color, without any kind of design or patterning. Not that I am trying to say that this depiction is simplistic – not by any means. Given the size of the work, this is actually rather fine and extensive detail, and shows incredible skill. We can even see the little ties holding the figures' jackets closed. Note also the watercolor-esque appearance of the colors here, the way they subtly grow deeper and fainter within a given field of color. This is much easier to see on the actual object than on a digital reproduction, though here, perhaps it's most easily seen in this green cloth, or blanket, covering the rear of the horse.

#### SLIDE THIRTEEN

Now, let us take a look at how another artist depicted the exact same subject. This is a detail from a handscroll by the artist Kanô Shunko, today in the collection of the British Museum in London. It depicts the same 1710 Ryukyuan mission, and in this detail, we can see the same Deputy Ambassador, Yoza ueekata, being carried along in his palanquin. Unlike the Hawaii scroll, which was painted on paper, this one is a somewhat more lavish affair, having been painted on silk. Even in this digital image, we can clearly see the texture of the silk. Shunko's scroll is a bit larger than the Hawaii scroll, being about 34 ½ cm high, while the one here at UH is about 27 cm high. So, Shunko has some more space, but not that much more, and yet, within it, he produces something that I think is clearly far more detailed. Shunko

still uses outlines on his forms, as was quite standard, but his lines are much finer, and lack the calligraphic quality of the Hawaii scroll. The far higher level of detail here is, I think, quite clear. Few of the garments here are depicted simply in solid colors – all have complex textured patterns or designs, and we can almost, even, make out the family crests emblazoned on the sleeves and shoulders of the samurai. Even the swords show a bit more form and detail, being not merely single brushstrokes, but shaped forms, with the hilts and handguards clearly drawn in.

It is unclear who Kanô Shunko painted this scroll for, or for what purpose, so I'm afraid I cannot say that the differences between these two scrolls are necessarily indicative of particular types, or categories, that is, I cannot say that this one is representative of those painted for the shogunate, and that one for commoner patrons, or that this is representative of this context, or that context. Thus far in my research, unfortunately, I have not come across any Ryukyu procession scrolls, in fact, for which we know the conditions of its production, or who the patron was.

#### SLIDE FOURTEEN

However, these scrolls, prints, and illustrated books form an array of representations which are invaluable as historical documents, helping us to not only understand these missions on a technical level – how the mission was organized, what the systems of political symbolism were, precisely which officials took part in which missions – but also, providing a visual that helps us imagine the actual experience, the actual spectacle of the event itself, and in so doing, helps bring the embassies, and Ryukyuan history and historical culture more broadly, to life for us, in a way that mere textual descriptions cannot.

Mahalo. Thank you.