

Kampai!:

The Arts of Japanese Sake

Pacific Asia Museum, Pasadena

March 5 – June 20, 2004

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Rice wine, or *sake*, is considered by many to be the national drink of Japan. Made from fermented rice, it has been enjoyed for 2,000 years and has played important roles in traditional Japanese society. Sake is believed to bring people closer to the gods, so it has been a key element in the worship of the native deities of Japan. Sake has also brought people closer to each other through social rituals including weddings, festivals and parties.

Over the centuries, significant artistic traditions have evolved relating to sake, including the ceramic and lacquer vessels for storing, serving and drinking the wine, as well as the artwork used to promote and sell sake and images of people and gods enjoying the drink. This exhibition is the first in an American museum to introduce the drink of sake, its production and its importance in Japanese religious and social rituals.



Sake Bottle
Motif by Shoji Hamada
Japan, early 20th C.
Stoneware and Glaze.
Pacific Asia Museum
Collection, gift of Mrs.
Lawrence Shepard.

Sake: The Drink

Sake is an alcoholic beverage made principally with rice and water. It is fermented using a mold called *koji* that turns the starch in the rice into sugar. Yeast feeds off the sugar as it ferments the rice-water mixture. The mixture is then pressed, filtered and pasteurized. The alcoholic content of sake is roughly 15%, and depending on the quality of the ingredients and brewing techniques, can have a variety of flavors. It is served both hot and cold, and is typically served in bottles called *tokkuri* and drunk out of cups called *ochoko*. These sake vessels are often artistic masterpieces created out of ceramic, lacquer, metal and other materials.

Sake: The Drink of the Gods

Traditionally, the Japanese believe in *kami*, or higher beings that inhabit mountains, rivers, and other natural phenomena. These kami possess both creative and destructive powers, and it is important to show them respect and reverence. In indigenous Shinto rituals and ceremonies, sake is offered to the kami to invoke their good will and support, and participants in Shinto rituals and festivals also consume the sake as a way to commune with the gods. The gods are believed to enjoy drinking sake, and many artworks depict gods and supernatural beings doing just that.

Sake: The Drink of the People

Japan is primarily an agricultural nation, and for almost 2,000 years, rice has been a staple food. Not surprisingly, rice wine has played an important role in Japanese social customs and celebrations. From the 17th century, sake was enjoyed in the licensed Pleasure Quarters, or Floating World (*ukiyo*) of major cities, where townspeople went in order to relax and forget their troubles. Many images depict courtesans and their guests enjoying the wine and each other's company. For centuries, sake has also played a role in weddings, New Year celebrations and cherry blossom viewing parties. Some of the finest lacquer and porcelain art works have been created for the consumption of sake on these special occasions, and images abound of Japanese of all social classes bonding while drinking sake.



Double-Gourd Sake Bottle
Japan, late 19th C. Molded gourd. Pacific Asia Museum Collection, Museum purchase with funds from the Collectors' Circle.

Exhibition Sponsors

The exhibition is made possible through the generous support of the Consulate General of Japan, The Japan Foundation, Japan Airlines, Japon Bistro, and Frank and Toshi Mosher. Additional support is provided by David and Margaret Barry and Dave and Mitsuko Felton. *Sushi & Tofu Magazine* and *Cultural News* are the exhibition's media sponsors. The exhibition has been organized in partnership with the Japan America Society and Asia Society in celebration of the 150th anniversary of Japan-US relations.

Painting of a Scene in the Licensed Quarters

Sukenobu School, Japan, c. 1745. Ink, color and gofun on paper.
Pacific Asia Museum Collection, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Ross



Related Educational Programs

Friday March 5, 2004, 7pm-9pm

Lecture and Sake Tasting: *All About Sake*

By sake expert, John Gauntner, followed by a Book Signing
Admission \$35 (\$25 for members of PAM, JAS, the Asia Society)

John Gauntner is the leading non-Japanese authority on sake and currently resides in Japan. His lecture will cover the basics of sake production, the grades of sake, what makes a good sake, and how to select and enjoy premium sake. Reservations required. To reserve, call (626) 449-2742, extension 40.

Saturday March 13, 2004, 2pm

Curator's Tour of *Kampai! The Arts of Japanese Sake*

Exhibition Tour with Meher McArthur, Pacific Asia Museum Curator of East Asian Art. Free with Museum admission. Tour limited to 40 people. To reserve, call (626) 449-2742, extension 40.

Saturday April 10, 2004, 11am

An Introduction to the Decorative Arts of Japan

Lecture with Hollis Goodall, Associate Curator of Japanese Art, LACMA. Free with Museum admission

Hollis Goodall has worked at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art for 16 years and has curated roughly 250 exhibitions of Japanese art. This lecture will introduce Japan's lacquer, textile, ceramic and *netsuke* traditions. Free to school teachers as part of the Pacific Asia Museum Teacher Program series funded by the Freeman Foundation. For information, call (626) 449-2742, extension 40.

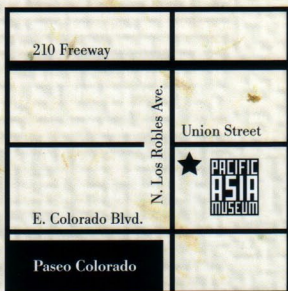
Tours and Workshops for School Groups

In conjunction with *Kampai!*, Pacific Asia Museum is offering free docent-led school tours of the museum followed by workshops led by artist-educators, funded by the Freeman Foundation. To reserve tours, please call (626) 449-2742, extension 23.

Pacific Asia Museum

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Admission: \$7 Adults,
\$5 Students/Seniors
Children under 12 free.



Hours: Wednesday - Sunday 10am-5pm and until 8pm on Friday



Cover Image: Scroll painting of Courtesan and Attendants
Teisai Hokuba (1770-1844 AD) Japan, 1840 ink and color on paper.
Pacific Asia Museum Collection, gift of Mr. and Mrs. Russell Swendseid