

Curve Lines of 20th Century Japanese Toys in the Dutch East Indies

Mahathelge Ahmad Supriyanto

Alumnus of Master's Program in History, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

*Email: mahathelgeahmad@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The influence of Japanese culture and commodities had been present in the Dutch East Indies since the mid-19th century, one of which was toys. There were many types of toy products imported from the land of the rising sun. Basically, these products did not just appear out of nowhere, but there was a causality from various events that occurred in Japan, which led to the arrival of Japanese products, especially toys. This study discusses the early arrival of Japanese diaspora in the Dutch East Indies who chose a life in trade. One of the products sold by the Japanese diaspora is toys. The development and changes in the types of toys will be described in this study. This article used a historical method in the form of a literature study consisting of various stages of research, including heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography. The results of this study explain that many Japanese diasporas in the Dutch East Indies established trading businesses, starting from shops to importers. One of the main commodities of the Japanese diaspora was toys. Japanese toys had a large market in the Dutch East Indies. This situation persisted until the eve of World War II. Due to various political barriers in the country, the Japanese diaspora in the Dutch East Indies were deported to their homeland. However, after World War II, the export of Japanese toys to the international market continued to grow instead.

Keyword: Japanese Toys, Dutch East Indies, Cultural History, Japanese Diaspora

INTRODUCTION

Before the 20th century, in any part of the world, most children had few toys, and the types of toys they did have were very limited. In addition, children did not have much time to play. A small number of children attended school, but most children helped their parents with simple tasks around the house or in the fields. In Ancient Greece, when boys did not attend school and girls did not work, they played ball games with inflated pig bladders. They also played with knucklebones.

Children also played with toys such as spinning tops, dolls, model horses with wheels, hoops, and rocking horses. Roman children played with wooden or clay dolls and hoops. They also played ball games and board games. These children also played with animal knucklebones. Toys did not change much over the centuries. Then in the 16th century in Europe, children still played with wooden dolls. (These dolls were called Bartolomeus babies because they were sold at St. Bartolomeus market in London). They also played with cups and balls (wooden balls tied with string to one end of a handle with a wooden cup at the other end). Toys essentially have different stories and histories in each region.

In Germany. Sometimes toys are held to entertain, at other times they are carefully assembled into a larger whole, and at still other times they are used chaotically in wild confrontations. The form of toys and the games they inspire are an important part of children's socialization into the world. Indeed, toys are a very useful tool for investigating the emergence of modernity. These simple instruments of children's happiness highlight the emergence of consumer capitalism, the transformation of middle-class family life structures, and the emergence of discourses on gender, honor, and modernism. The late 19th and early 20th centuries were a golden age for children's toys.

“And between two wars, little Johann played. Unaware and calm, with his soft, curly hair and voluminous dress, he played in the garden near the fountain, or in the small gallery separated for him by a pillar fence. ... [He] played out the dramas of his four-and-a-half-year-old life—dramas whose meaning and charm could not be understood by adults: that required nothing more than a few pebbles, or a stick with a dandelion as a helmet, because these dramas demanded a pure, strong, brilliant, uneducated, and unintimidated imagination from the happy years before life touched us, when neither duty nor regret dared to burden us in the slightest”

The quote is from Thomas Mann in his work *Buddenbrooks*. Thomas explains that play is a radical part of adult life. Play cannot be understood by adults. A child who plays freely is protected from the profane adult world that may not give them “the slightest touch.” Childhood is a special moment, a separate stage of life, defined by play. In Mann's other work, *Doctor Faustus*, he explains that Helmut and Inez want to raise their daughters “perfectly.” Their room is filled with a neatly arranged world of toys, teddy bears, sheep on wheels, jumping toys, Käthe Kruse dolls, trains, which is a pattern of paradise for real children.

Thomas Mann understood the two sides of the “dual ideal” of middle-class childhood; a distinct period of life separate from adulthood, marked by innocence and joy, but also a period of preparation and training for adulthood. Similarly, he presents games and toys as symbols of heavenly freedom and also as tools for shaping future citizens, which is more or less how toys were viewed in the 20th century (Budde, 1994).

The toy market is fundamentally influenced by various factors outside the market, but even so, market demands also greatly influence the types of toys available for children. Toy manufacturers are well aware of the need to stand out and attract attention. This is a result of a crowded market where toys themselves, rather than advertisements, are often the primary means of attracting consumer interest. It is also a function of retailers' interest in using toys to draw attention to their stores (Hamlin, 2007).

This also applies to Japan, after the Meiji Restoration, Mutsuhito was crowned emperor in 1868 with Meiji as the title of his reign, becoming the Meiji succession that rose to power coinciding with the end of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the restoration of the emperor from the highest executive authority of the Land of the Rising Sun.

Meiji supported the growing popular consensus on the need to modernize Japan along Western lines, which had developed as a result of the country's renewed contact with foreign nations after a period of cultural and economic isolation lasting 250 years. In 1868,

Meiji adopted the Five-Principle Oath Charter, which Japan launched in its program of emulating Western countries.

Emperor Meiji provided certainty about how Japan would deal with foreign parties. In April 1868, about three months after gaining power following various rebellions, Emperor Meiji and his advisors issued a five-article oath, which included deliberation or discussion on all matters, participation of all social classes in state administration, freedom for all people to obtain employment, abandoning bad habits of the past, and seeking knowledge from around the world to strengthen the country. Slogans against foreigners, such as *Sonno Jo* (respect the Emperor, expel the barbarians), were immediately replaced by more pragmatic and constructive slogans such as *Wakon Yosai* (Japanese spirit, Western learning).

One of the policies during the early stages of Japan's modernization was Japan's stance to be more oriented towards its own strength or self-reliance rather than relying on foreign aid. Japanese leaders realized that Japan's financial strength during the Meiji Restoration was very limited. Therefore, the skills of the Japanese people were still very lacking. Because of this, limited resources were used to the maximum to build industry. Silk exports were the main source of income in the early stages. Meanwhile, young Japanese people were allowed to study in Europe. At that time, Japan learned a lot from Britain, France, and Germany, depending on the field of study. This then influenced industrial development in Japan, one of which was in the manufacture of toys, which would later become a popular commodity in the Dutch East Indies.

METHOD

This study will use historical research methods in the form of literature studies, consisting of various stages of research, including heuristics, criticism, interpretation, and historiography (Kuntowijoyo 2003). The theme of this study is the curve of Japanese toys during the Dutch East Indies period. The title *Garis kurva* (Curve) itself is an analogy of the development of Japanese toys in the Dutch East Indies. The next stage is heuristics, which is the collection of historical sources such as archives, newspapers, books, or others that are relevant to the research theme. In the criticism stage, a comparison will be made between one source and another. Based on these various sources, interpretation through analysis will be carried out by analyzing the facts based on the information in the main sources.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Development and Export of *Omocha* (Toys) in Japan

The oldest written record of the origin of the word “toy” in Japan was found in the oldest Chinese poetry collection, the *Book of Songs* (a collection of poems from the 11th to 6th centuries BC). The words “*かざりのたま*(*Kazari no tama*)” and “*かざりのいとまき*(*Kazari no i, to maki*)” refer to the practice of giving ‘toys’ balls to baby boys and “toys” made of tiles to baby girls. The Late Han Chinese Book (completed around 432), a famous text for its descriptions of ancient Japan, contains the words “toy” and “playthings,” as well as “Yanzi,” which describes the Spring and Autumn period (770–402 BC), contains the word toy.

Meanwhile, the oldest known kanji character for “*翫*” (*Wan ro*) mean enjoyment appears in the “*Tōdaiji Temple Offering List*” from the Nara period, which is thought to refer to personal items cherished by Emperor Shōmu during his lifetime. From the Edo period to the mid-Meiji period, kanji characters for “toy” included “*翫之物* (*Wán Ro Kore Mono*)”, “*翫物* (*Wán Ro Mono*)”, “*口物* (*Ro Mono*)”, “*手楽* (*Te Raku* ”, “*持楽器* (*Ji Gakki*)”, and “*玩物* (*Wánwù*)” (Kuwabari, 2011). The words “*もてあそび* (*Moteasobi*)” and “*もちあそび* (*Mochi asobi*)” are the origins of the modern word ‘*おもちゃ*’ (*omocha*), which means toy, but the word “*omocha*” itself comes from the slang of the women of the imperial court during the Muromachi period. In other words, the word “*もてあそび*” (*mochi asobi*) was shortened by adding “*お* (*o*)” at the beginning, and evolved from *mochi asobi* to *omochi asobi*, then to *omochia*, and finally to *omocha*.

During the Edo period, “*omocha*” (toys) began to be used by children. In spoken language, the words “*mochi asobi*” (playing with hands) and “*teasobi*” (playing with hands) were used in everyday life. These words were disliked by educators responsible for Meiji culture because they were considered impolite. Subsequently, during the unification of the national language in the middle of the Meiji period, the colloquial words were unified as *omocha* (Kuwabari, 2011). Figure 1 below shows an example of a toy from the Edo period.



Figure 1. Japansche Speelgoed (1826-1828)
(Source: <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/586649>)

During the Meiji period, toy production continued but did not see a significant increase following the Meiji Restoration until the early 20th century, when the export trade began to take off. One type of toy that was very popular during the Meiji era was the *Kokeshi* doll (Abe, 2018). The images below show examples of *Kokeshi* dolls, a traditional Japanese toy.



Figure 2. Kokeshi (1957)

(Source: <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/762481>)

The Kokeshi doll shown above is a contemporary piece; since no documentation of Meiji-era Kokeshi dolls has been found, an image reflecting the shape of the toy has been used. The production of traditional Japanese toys during the Edo- Meiji period was quite widespread in Okayama Prefecture (Yoshimitsu, 1959). Figure 3 is an example of a toy model from the post-Meiji Restoration period. The doll in the documentation is a symbol for Boys' Day celebrations. The toy symbolizes male virtues and is displayed and hung in a room. Dolls produced during that era tended to adapt heroic figures from Japanese history as symbols of courage and strength. Such as the samurai sitting on top, who is Minamoto no Yoritomo.



Figure 3. Minamoto no Yoritomo Spielgoed (1880-1907)

(Source: <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/716333>)

Minamoto no Yoritomo lived from 1147 to 1199. During that time, two powerful samurai families competed for power, namely the Taira and Minamoto. During the Taira-Minamoto War (1180-1185), the Taira initially had the upper hand. However, Yoritomo, leader of the Minamoto family, gathered a large army. With this, he defeated the Taira. He was appointed shogun, or supreme commander. In history, Yoritomo was a strict ruler who did not hesitate to kill his rebellious brothers. He was the first shogun to hold full political power in addition to military power.

The development of Japanese industry was essentially quite slow, due to Japan's period of isolation in the past, which limited the country's commercial and industrial development. Agriculture retained the best talent. However, like the merchant and agricultural classes, artisans were neglected, and trade had long been considered inferior. Then there was the military class, with its own unique morality, which held a dominant social position. The army and navy still represented the most important factors in Japanese political life during the Meiji era.

In Meiji's era, Toys industry in Japan still relied on traditional methods, including the use of raw materials for the production of toys. Bamboo was a very common raw material used during that period. During this period, toys were inexpensive because they were made of bamboo, a material that is prone to damage, especially if infested with insects. Basically, there were quite a few types of toys made in Japan in the 19th century, such as "Tako to Unari" (a dragon on a string) and "Take-uma" (a toy horse), (Spörry, 1903).



Figure 4. Tako to Unari and Take-uma (1903)

(Source: Die Verwendung des Bambus in Japan und Katalog der Spörry'schen Bambus-Sammlung)

In addition to the two types of toys mentioned above, there are many other types and models of bamboo toys, including beetle cages (*mushi-kago*), spinning tops (*tonbo*), masks (*men*), seesaws (*kakubei-jishi*), slingshots (*mame-teppo*), water guns (*mizu-teppo*), blowguns (*fuki-ya*), along with quivers and paper arrows with bamboo tips for shooting small birds, tall sticks or knots tied to a string (*take-uma*), balls that roll along a bamboo track (*yoko-yoko*), water pipes (*mizu-dashi*), bows and arrows (*yumi to ya*) for shooting birds and frogs, spinning tops (*koma*), flutes (*fue*) or (*hatsune*), swords (*katana*), spears (*yari*), spring-loaded rings (*kuruma*) operated by a hook rather than by striking, clappers (*gara-gara-bue*), paper wind spinners (*kaze-guruma*), and whistles and tubes to imitate

various animal sounds, such as sparrows, roosters, hens, pigeons, larks, bulbuls, cuckoos, swans, snipes, as well as frogs, cats, cows, etc (Spörry, 1903). A lot is done to entertain and delight children, and toy manufacturers deserve praise for their extraordinary creativity in producing toys that are fun, cute, and often very affordable.

Several decades after the Meiji Restoration, modernization began to take hold in Japan, with various industrial sectors emerging and developing. Essentially, the early development of Japanese industry was based on several long-standing foundations such as silk factories, lacquerware crafts, and porcelain manufacturing. After the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese government sent many of its scholars to European countries to study a wide range of subjects, from military affairs, engineering, architecture to the industrial sector. In a short time, Japan was able to produce goods similar to those from European countries—particularly Germany, the United Kingdom, and France—albeit with imperfect quality. For example, in the clothing sector, by 1896, *French Mouns* uniforms and English shirts—which had once been popular imports—became unpopular because they were now being produced domestically in Japan. To promote domestic industry, the chambers of commerce in Osaka and Tokyo urged the government to abolish all import duties. In Japan, Osaka, Tokyo, and Yokohama were major industrial regions; the Osaka area, in particular, was home to numerous smelting, foundry, and other industrial plants (Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, February 12, 1898).

The effects of modernization following the Meiji Restoration not only transformed the labor system—particularly in the industrial sector—but also led to a distinction in the toy market between “local toys” and “modern toys.” Traditional toys, whose prototypes were created during the Edo period, were originally sold in various regions as children’s toys. After the Meiji Restoration, modern toys were introduced from advanced Western countries, and traditional Japanese toys (later known as “folk toys”), which were based on ancient folk traditions, were rejected as outdated and superstitious (Ryosuke, 1971).

The emergence of the concept of “local toys” is largely due to the presence of urban intellectuals, represented by enthusiasts. It can be said that the concept of “local toys” arose from the nostalgia of urban intellectuals for the toys that remained in their hometowns or places of residence, as symbols of a vanishing Edo culture. During the Meiji Period (1868–1912), with the start of trade with foreign countries, toys made from a new material, “tin,” were imported; this later became a pioneering step in the production of “modern toys” in Japan using tin.

“modern toys” were quite popular due to industrial development in Japan, which initially imported modern toys from European countries but later began manufacturing them domestically and exporting them to other countries, including the Dutch East Indies. By the end of the 19th century, toys from Japan had already entered the Dutch East Indies market, as can be seen from the newspaper advertisement below.



Figure 5. Japansch Speelgoed (Japan Toys)
(Source: Bataviaasch nieuwsblad, December 05, 1896.)

The advertisement above explains that there is a sale and lists the discount percentage for toy (*Japansch Speelgoed*) sales in the Dutch East Indies. Although no direct data has been found regarding changes in the systems of companies operating in the toy industry following the Meiji Restoration, this can be inferred by examining data on the rise in toy exports in the early 20th century. In “*Japan and her Exhibits*,” published by the “*Société des Expositions*” for the International Exposition in San Francisco, pages 81 and following contain data on the major goods produced in Japan during the years 1903–1908 and 1912, expressed in thousands of yen and valued at over one million yen. In this context, toys accounted for 1,550 in exports (Van Kol, 1916). Japan after the Meiji Restoration expected industry to ease the heavy burden caused by overpopulation. This was its new task, after forced cooperation in maintaining the country's political independence and the economic emancipation of its people. Moreover, Japan was not an industrialized country, and its industrial growth rate disappointed many entrepreneurial Japanese politicians. This was because, even though the ever-vigilant government had removed many obstacles, the industrial structure needed a more solid foundation for natural development. This depended mainly on capital, technology, raw materials, energy, labor, and markets.

Japanese Commodity and The Diasporas in the Dutch East Indies

Despite the fact that, as mentioned earlier, Japanese toys were already being sold in the Dutch East Indies in 1896, there were essentially no direct shipments between Java and Japan prior to 1902; Japanese goods were mostly transported to the Dutch East Indies via Singapore, and Dutch East Indies agricultural products—including Javanese sugar—were mostly shipped via the same route. However, that year, the Java-China-Japan Line was established with a capital of 15 million guilders by several Dutch shipping companies, including the Nederland Line and the Rotterdam Lloyd Line, and the following year it began operating a direct route for the transport of passengers and cargo. The company offered one voyage every four weeks between Java and Japan (Kaji, 1943). Java-China-

Japan was officially established on September 15, 1902; however, regarding the initial capital, a report in the *Algemeen Handelsblad* newspaper states that the initial capital for the company's establishment was 6,000,000 guilders (*Algemeen Handelsblad*, April, 16, 1903). It can be said that all goods imported from Japan to be sold by Japanese stores in the Dutch East Indies were transported by this shipping company.

Then in 1912, a Japanese shipping company began operating the route—initially via Taiwan and Singapore. That year, three shipowners pooled their capital to form Nanyo Gumi under the auspices of the Japanese Ministry of Communications. The company began operating three 3,000-gross-ton class ships on the route to transport passengers and cargo, and received subsidies from the ministry of 75,000 yen in 1912, in 1914, the company was reorganized and renamed Nanyo Yosen Kaisha (Asahara, 1978). Basically, goods from Japan sold in the Dutch East Indies were shipped using those shipping companies.

Although Japanese goods—particularly toys—had already arrived in the Dutch East Indies by the late 19th century, Japanese stores are believed to have first appeared at the very beginning of the 20th century, specifically in 1901, starting with the Choya store in Surabaya (Meta, 2008). Essentially, there were various reasons why Japanese people sought to start businesses in the Dutch East Indies, but one reason frequently cited by Japanese people at the time was the strong anti-immigration sentiment in the United States, which had an impact on other countries. This left young people who wanted to pursue careers abroad feeling uncertain, and the Dutch East Indies became one of their solutions (Yano, 1977). At the beginning of the 20th century, Japanese stores and products from this country were quite popular, as can be seen in Figure 6, which shows an advertisement for Japanese products and stores located in Surabaya. Store ownership became a business activity for the Japanese diaspora in the Dutch East Indies.



Figure 6. Japanese Product and Store Advertisements
(Source: Soerabaijasch handelsblad, March 23, 1906.)

The increase in the Japanese diaspora in the Dutch East Indies was caused by economic factors in that country. Working conditions in Japan at the end of the 19th century were quite dire. In 1899, there were 280,922 workers employed in various factories in Japan. Of that number, 184,111 were women. They generally worked twelve hours a day, and sometimes fifteen hours, for wages of six to twelve shillings (Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad, September 2, 1905).

During the early 20th century, Japanese stores in the Dutch East Indies enjoyed great popularity, this success is due in no small part to their business strategies. Among these strategies are excellent and courteous service, low prices, and products known for their high quality, in addition to other strategies related to their internal management systems. Furnivall argues that the success of Japanese stores stems from a strategic business combination of high-quality yet affordable products, stable pricing, and control over their import and distribution networks (Furnivall, 1939). The various goods sold by Japanese stores include soap, ceramics, medicines, textiles, and children's toys.

Foeroekawa & Co.
JAPANSCH E TOKO,
PADANG, PONDOK.
 Groote keuze van
prachtige Japansche Artikelen.
 Gedecoreerde Thee- en Koffie-serviezen,
 Vazen Bloempotten, Pullen op standaards,
 Muurborden, enz. Jap. schilderijen.
Pajongs in soorten.
PRESENTEEBLADEN in groote verscheiden-
 heid. Zeer mooie artikelen in japansh houtwerk.
Schutseis en Etagères
 Practische nachtlampen met ballon,
 zeer goedkoop!! **MATTEN**
JAPANSCH SPEELGOED, zeer aardig.
 Kimonos, jap. Zijde, jap. Chitsen, ijzersterk, zeer
 geschikt voor dameskleed ng.
HEERENKLEDEN, KRAGEN, DASEN,
BORSTROKKEN.
MEDICIJNEN w. o. de beroemde
SOMATOSE, zeer versterkend.
robate Verdelgngsmiddelen voor
 ongedierte (wandluizen enz.); idem voor mieren
HEERLIJKE LIMONADE,
EIGEN FABRIKAAT.
Billike Prijzen! Belesfd aanbevolen.
 50
Voor Zeilen!
STEVIGE KATROLLEN per paar/ 1.50
DAARBIJ PASSEND TOUW, rol (48mtr) 1.50
 Winkel Mh. v/h P. Bäumer & Co. Padang
R
Pondok

Figure 7. Foeroekawa & Co
 (Source: Sumatra-Bode, Juny 16, 1906.)

The above is the oldest known advertisement for Japanese toys sold by a Japanese store in the Dutch East Indies. The advertisement, which appeared in the Sumatra Bode newspaper, states that the Foerokawa store, located in Padang, sold a variety of goods, including children's toys. During the Meiji era, early childhood education was emphasized, and toys with the word "education" in their names began to attract attention. Educational toys that improved children's concentration and dexterity while they played, and taught them about household chores, became increasingly popular.

Toys were quite popular items, along with textiles and medicines. In 1909, Toyo & Co, a Japanese store in Padang, Dutch East Indies, imported 200 new types of toys from Japan to sell in Padang, indicating that Japanese toys were quite popular (Sumatra-Bode, November 11, 1909).

Industrial development in Japan in the early 20th century was not always beneficial. The devaluation of the yen at that time showed that a low exchange rate was a double-edged sword for Japan. Sometimes it could have a positive short-term impact in terms of exports. However, in Japan, exports depended on important raw materials purchased from abroad. The price of these raw materials would not continue to fall. In addition, Japan's imports exceeded its exports. Japan paid for this surplus not with expensive pounds, but with cheap labor (Roos, 1935).

The Dutch East Indies was essentially a natural market for Japan. The distance between producers and consumers in this region was relatively short. This made transportation cheaper and contact easier. Commodities from Japan sold well in the Dutch East Indies. The indigenous population, which was economically disadvantaged, had an urgent need for products that were available at low prices. And without a policy of closing Western markets or industrialization in the field, Japan was able to meet this need. Japan's share of imports to the Dutch East Indies has increased significantly in recent years. The expansion of the Japanese textile and toy industries has increasingly met the urgent needs of the financially disadvantaged Dutch East Indies.

The Popularity of Japanese Toys in the Dutch East Indies

In the early 20th century, Japan was experiencing massive economic growth, and toys from the Taisho era dominated the toy commodity trade, especially in the Dutch East Indies. One toy that was quite popular in 1912 was Zigomar. Essentially, Zigomar was a silent drama film from France. After the film rose to fame and gained popularity, Japanese toy manufacturers began producing miniature versions of Zigomar made from rubber and celluloid. The following year, a very popular toy was produced in Japan. The toy was created by Rose O'Neill in 1909, and its popularity exploded, leading to mass production in Germany. Meanwhile, in Japan, this doll was also produced and became quite popular. Japanese-made celluloid toys began to enter the global market and replace the German market, with the Dutch East Indies being one of the export destinations.



Figure 8. Toys Advertising Toko Nipponkang
(Source: Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië, November 25, 1911.)

The newspaper documentation above is proof that Japanese toys were quite popular in the Dutch East Indies. An advertisement in the Nipponkang store newspaper stated that the store had a large stock of crafts and toys from Japan that were suitable for St. Nicholas celebrations. The celebrations held in the Dutch East Indies served as a signal for Japanese diaspora stores to advertise toys. Figure 9 shows a similar advertisement for toys from the K. Shimane store.



Figure 9. Toys Advertising Toko K. Shimane
(Source: Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië, November 18, 1914.)

In advertisement figure 9, it can be seen that in celebration of Saint Nicholas Day, K.

Shimane store is offering a 10% discount from November 25 to December 5. Between the two sides of the advertisement, there is an illustration of doll toys. The outbreak of World War I in 1914 led to an increase in imports of Japanese goods to the Dutch East Indies due to the cessation of supplies from Europe. This situation also prompted several Japanese stores that had previously been engaged in retail sales to become general importers, as was the case with Nanyou Shoukai. An increase in exports with better quality was a prominent feature of Japanese toy production. Although Japanese toy exports in 1915 amounted to around 600,000 yen, this figure had increased to 1,497,000 yen in 1910 and to 2,591,009 yen in 1914, this represents an increase of approximately 332 percent over a nine-year period. Imports from Japan were distributed to the United States, Australia, China, British East Indies, and Dutch East Indies, while Japanese exports to the United States accounted for 40 percent of total exports, and German imports to the United States accounted for approximately 80 percent of total imports to the United States. Thus, the United States led the world in terms of the percentage of exports from Japan, and the United Kingdom, Eastern Hungary, France, and Belgium lagged far behind the United States in orders for Japanese toys. The Japanese toy industry was initially a cottage industry, but gradually developed into a large-scale industry (De Sumatra Post, January 26, 1916).

When World War I broke out, a global shipping shortage ensued, which worsened as the war continued. During the war years, the tonnage of European ships serving the Dutch East Indies declined sharply as they were sunk or recalled to their home countries in Europe. Consequently, Dutch shipping tonnage fell from 20 million at the start of the war to 15 million in 1918, British tonnage from about 5.4 million to just 1.34 million, and German tonnage from about 2 million to nearly zero. Italy, Spain, and Denmark also experienced sharp declines in their shipping tonnage. However, during the same period, Japanese tonnage increased from 0.6 million to about 1.23 million (Nanyo Kyokai Zasshi February 29, 1920). In addition, due to the near absence of stiff European competition in imports to the Dutch East Indies, Japan began supplying the Dutch colony with large quantities of manufactured goods, including children's toys, thereby increasing the demand for shipping services on the Java-Japan route. The value of Japanese exports to the Dutch East Indies rose sharply from just 5.5 million guilders in 1913 to 104.8 million guilders in 1918. Similarly, imports from the colony, consisting largely of primary commodities (particularly sugar), increased from 35.8 million guilders to 77.8 million guilders during the same years (Takei, 1929).

During the early 20th century, Japan's toy manufacturing industry developed quite well. In terms of exports, Japan ranked second after Germany. The toy industry in Japan grew rapidly during World War I. Japan's export value in 1913 was 2,489,792 yen. Due to the disappearance of several competitors from the world market, exports continued to increase, reaching a value of 21,189,072 yen in 1920. When Germany, France, and Czechoslovakia re-entered the world market with their products, Japan felt the impact, namely a decline in exports, which in 1921 only reached a value of 7,003,838 yen, there were various types of toys produced by Japan in the early 20th century. First, toys made of celluloid such as rattles, balls, animals, bottles, and dolls; second, toys made of rubber including balls, animals, birds that could make sounds, and others. Third, there were

wooden toys limited to colored animals and rocking horses. Fourth, there were iron toys used to produce cars, bicycles, trains, train tracks, and swords. Finally, there were items made from other materials, including all types of toys made from metal and tin, such as tin soldiers, mechanical dolls, electric trains, and others. American toys imported into Japan were imitated by Japanese manufacturers. These toys were sold at much lower prices, competing with American products. Basically, most Japanese toys were intended for export (Algemeen Handelsblad Voor Nederlandsch-Indië, January 13, 1927).

Table 1. The Amount of Japanese Toy Exports in the Early 20th Century

Years	Export Volume of Toys in Yen
1915	4.533.486
1916	7.640.020
1917	8.409.518
1918	10.190.028
1919	13.001.436
1920	21.189.077
1921	7.003.838
1922	7.414.304
1923	7.140.008
1924	8.300.432
1925	10.788.702

(Source: Algemeen Handelsblad Voor Nederlandsch-Indië, January 13, 1927.)

In 1920, due to the impact of war, exports were very high, reaching more than 21 million yen, then falling to 7 million yen the following year. Basically, the decline in export value was due to a decline in the quality of products sold by Japanese stores as a result of high demand, so that production and import processes were carried out without regard to quality. This became the focus of harsh criticism from Dutch East Indies consumers regarding Japanese products, in this case toys. In 1922, there was criticism of the poor quality of toys for Christmas, which were not as good as the products before the First World War (Jawa Nippou, January 1, 1922). Nevertheless, Japanese toy exports rose again in the following years.

Export figures at the end of 1925 began to increase, as exports had reached 10 million yen in 1925. These figures show that Japan did not allow itself to be marginalized and was a strong competitor for European and American toys. In the newspaper *De Koerier* published on December 17, 1927, there was a column with the title “*Wat de Kleine Koeriers van Tante Pen antwoorden op de Wedstrijd-Vragen, In Welke Winklen van je woonplaats ga je liefst met moeder boodschappen doen?*” The column asks readers a question: “Which store in your hometown do you like to visit with your mother?” The responses in the column mostly mention shops owned by Japanese expatriates, with toys being the reason for purchase. One example is Toko Japan in Purbalingga, where visitors say they enjoy going there because it has many toys. Another favorite destination is Toko Fuji Yoko in

Yogyakarta, which has a complete selection of toys (De Koerier, December 17, 1927). Although Japanese goods, including toys, were quite popular in the Dutch East Indies in the early 20th century, there were still problems that arose, including a boycott of Japanese products by the Chinese community. The boycott was carried out as a form of anti-American movement. In 1928, there were many boycotts of Japanese products carried out in major cities in Java by the Chinese community (De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden Indisch Nieuws-en advertend'ebblad, September 18, 1928). In addition, the impact of World War I had a significant effect on the Dutch East Indies in the following years.

The Problem of the Japanese Diaspora in the Dutch East Indies in the 20th Century

The Great Depression of 1929 had an impact on Japanese diaspora shops in the Dutch East Indies. The devaluation policy implemented by the Japanese government two years earlier caused the prices of Japanese products to decline. While this benefited buyers, it resulted in a decline in profits for Japanese stores. One Japanese store, Kawai Shoten, which had two branches and was based in the city of Mojokerto, explained that their sales had increased by 20 percent, but their profits had declined by up to 40 percent. During this unfavorable situation, several Japanese store chains, such as Fuji Yoko, owned by Masao Sawabe in Yogyakarta, took strategic steps by shifting their sales from products that were previously targeted at upper-class consumers to lower-class consumers (native Indonesians) in large quantities, even though the profits were low. In addition, they established extensive distribution routes to flood the Dutch East Indies market, which had been hit hard by the crisis, with Japanese products (Murayama, 1998).

The beginning of 1930 marked the start of difficult times for Japanese shops in the Dutch East Indies. The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 led to a boycott movement against Japanese products among the Chinese community, which grew increasingly radical. Calls were made to forcibly close small shops selling Japanese products throughout Java (Nawiyanto, 2010). In order to deal with the boycott, the Japanese diaspora took defensive measures by relying on the Dutch East Indies government's policy. While the Dutch East Indies government took action to suppress the Japanese boycott on the grounds that the movement could disrupt the social and political order in the Dutch East Indies, in addition to economic considerations that the supply of cheap Japanese goods was seen as capable of stabilizing the Dutch East Indies economy.

Towards the late 1936, there was a major change in the political relations between Japan and the Dutch East Indies. That year, Japan declared its withdrawal from the London and Washington agreements on naval disarmament, followed by Japan's declaration of its policy of expansion to the south as its national policy. This caused the Dutch East Indies government to be wary of Japan's actions and increase surveillance of Japanese people in the Dutch East Indies. The situation worsened after the outbreak of the Japanese-Chinese war in 1937, which gave rise to anti-Japanese movements among the Dutch and Chinese communities. In several cities, such as Bandung, a group of Dutch youths attacked several Japanese shop owners (Ken'ichi, 1998).

Boycotts and even acts of anarchy often occurred, such as incidents of Japanese children being pelted with stones on their way to school, Japanese shoppers being harassed, and Japanese shops being pelted with paint and human waste (Shiraishi, 1998). Entering 1940,

the political situation in Europe heated up as Germany began its invasion of Poland, and the alliance between Japan and Germany had an impact on the Japanese diaspora in the Dutch East Indies, causing anti-Japanese sentiment to increase and making the position of Japanese people living in the Dutch East Indies increasingly vulnerable and cornered. In such a situation, the Second Trade Agreement became a hope for saving their lives. In a column in the *Touindo Nippou* newspaper, there is a note that reads, “Our current feelings can be summed up in one word: hope. May our Dutch brothers and sisters join us in placing their hopes on the outcome of the negotiations between Japan and the Netherlands” (*Touindo Nippou*, August 20, 1940).

Unfortunately, this was in vain. On February 15, 1941, the Dutch East Indies government issued a policy revoking visa-free treatment for Japanese nationals, followed by a policy restricting goods and people from Japan to the Dutch East Indies and freezing Japanese assets in the Dutch East Indies on July 28, 1941. This was the final blow to the Japanese diaspora in the Dutch East Indies. Eventually, the Japanese diaspora left the Dutch East Indies to return to their homeland. They sold their assets, which they had built up over several decades, at low prices or simply abandoned them. This also marked the end of Japanese shops in the Dutch East Indies.

Despite the fact that the Japanese diaspora and Japanese products, in this case toys, were no longer sold in the Dutch East Indies, Japanese toy exports continued to grow even after World War II ended. Complaints during the sales period in the Dutch East Indies, namely that Japanese toys were cheap and of poor quality, have disappeared, according to toy exporters. This was because the Japanese industry had employed specially trained and highly skilled designers after the end of World War II, most of whom had engineering degrees. In 1913, Germany practically monopolized the toy market; it sold toys worth 104 million marks worldwide. By 1933, German exports had fallen to just 38 million. However, Japanese toy exports rose from 307,000 yen in 1912 to 26 million yen in 1933. And there were 40,000 unemployed in the Nuremberg toy industry. This fact affected not only the industrialists involved but also the general public, as Japan’s dominance in the toy market signified both a spiritual and an economic victory (Zischka, 1935). In 1950, Japanese toy exports reached \$63 million. This technical knowledge was indeed necessary, as modern toys were increasingly developing in the direction of electric-powered (dry cell battery) cars, exercise aids, and other moving toys. These toys were increasingly replacing dolls, animals, and mechanically moving objects. The new products being developed by the Japanese industry at that time and to be marketed for Christmas 1957 would consist mainly of electric toys. Previously, these types of toys had mostly come from Germany. The only limitation on Japanese toy exports was the limited amount of foreign exchange that most countries could afford for such imports (De Preangerbode, September 24, 1957).

Japanese toy manufacturers, who previously had to imitate products from Germany, Britain, and America due to a lack of skilled designers, were now able to operate completely independently. They were not afraid of foreign competition, but they were engaged in fierce competition among themselves. Therefore, new products from various factories were kept strictly confidential. Various measures were taken to ensure that new designs did not encounter problems before launch.

CONCLUSION

Prior to the Meiji era, toys in Japan were generally crafted using traditional methods by local artisans. These toys held significant cultural and educational value, often tied to community traditions and local beliefs. Examples of traditional Japanese toys include kokeshi dolls, spinning tops (koma), and wooden dolls used in specific celebrations. Toy production during that time was limited because it was done manually and was intended primarily for the domestic market. The materials used came from local resources such as bamboo, fabric, and others. In addition to entertaining children, toys from that era also served symbolic and moral educational functions. Furthermore, the Meiji Restoration brought a strong influence of Western culture to Japanese society. The modern education system and increased interaction with European countries and the United States led to changes in consumer preferences, which in turn affected the toy industry, where toys were divided into two categories: traditional toys and modern toys.

Western-style toys began to gain popularity in Japan, including European-style dolls, miniature vehicles, toy soldiers, and modern educational games, which contributed to economic modernization. Economic modernization during the Meiji era laid the foundation for the growth of the manufacturing industry, including the toy industry. Japan began producing toys for the international market, particularly after the growth of its domestic industrial capacity. From the late 19th century to the early 20th century, Japan was known as a producer of inexpensive, high-quality toys, particularly metal and mechanical toys. These products were exported to various countries, one of which was the Dutch East Indies. In this context, in addition to the toys being inexpensive and high-quality, Japanese merchants in the Dutch East Indies also played a role in the popularity of these products. Although Japanese merchants in the Dutch East Indies no longer existed due to political issues, the transformation of the toy industry during the Meiji era laid an important foundation for the future development of Japan's entertainment industry. After World War II, Japan emerged as one of the world's largest toy industry hubs through major companies such as Bandai, Takara Tomy, and Nintendo, which initially focused on traditional games before growing into global giants.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author would like to express deepest gratitude to his friends, Kyoka Matsuo and Asuka Hashizume from Yamagata University for their invaluable assistance in finding several references related to this research.

REFERENCES

- Abe, Takeshi. (2018). *Japan's local industries from a historical perspective: Exploring the Teikoku Databank database for insights*. Kokushikan University.
- Ackermann, E. (1905). "Spiel und Arbeit." In *Enzyklopädisches Handbuch der Pädagogik*, vol. 8. Langensalza, Hermann Beyer & Söhne.
- Amino, Y. (1992), "Deconstructing Japan" (trans. G. McCormack), *East Asian History*, No. 3, Australian National University, Canberra, pp. 121–42.

- Aoki, Sumio. (2017). *Indonesia di Mata Masyarakat Jepang di Hindia Belanda 100 Tahun yang Lalu dalam Kartu Pos Bergambar Foto*. Jakarta: The Daily Jakarta Shinbun.
- Asahara, johei. (1978). *Nihon Kaiun Hattenshi [A History of Japanese Shipping]*. Tokyo: Choryusha.
- Bederman, Gail. (1997). *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Budde, Gunilla-Friederike. (1994). *Auf dem Weg ins Bürgerleben: Kindheit und Erziehung in deutschen und englischen Bürgerfamilien 1840–1914*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Der Muelen, Van. (1923). *De Boekenmarkt In 1923*. A.W Sijthoff's Uitgeversmaatschappij. Leiden.
- Fröbel, Friedrich. (1900). *Pedagogies of the Kindergarten or His Ideas Concerning the Play and Playthings of the Child*. Translated by Josephine Jarvis. New York: D. Appleton & Co.
- Gotou, Ken'ichi. (1998). *Jepang dan Pergerakan Kebangsaan Indonesia*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia
- Hamlin, David. (2007). *Work and Play: The Production and Consumption of Toys in Germany, 1870– 1914*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Imperial Shipping Committee. (1939). *38th Report of the Imperial Shipping Committee: British Shipping in the Orient*. London: Imperial Shipping Conunittee
- Japansche Speelgoed*, (1826–1828). <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/586649>.
- Kaji, Teruyoshi. (1943). *Waran no tai Higashi-Indo Kaiun Seisaku no Enkaku [A History of Dutch Shipping Policy on the Netherlands Indies]*. Kokusai Keizai Kenkyu [International Economic Studies] (March): 61–78
- Kokishi Speelgoed*, (1957). <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/762481>.
- Kol, Van. H. (1916). *De Ontwikkeling Der Groot-Industrie In Japan, Deel I*. S-Gravenhage
- Kuntowijoyo. (2003). *Metodologi Sejarah Edisi Kedua*. Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana.
- Kuwabara, Itsumi (2011). *An Essay on Toys: The Potentialities of Toys for an Infant*. Bulletin of Chiba Keiai Junior College (33), 11–24.
- Minamoto no Yoritomo *Speelgoed* (1880–1907). <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11840/716333>
- Murayama, Yoshitada. (1998). *Pola Penetrasi Ekonomi Jepang ke Hindia Belanda sebelum Perang dalam Shiraishi Saya dan Shiraishi Takashi*. Orang Jepang di Koloni Asia Tenggara. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- Nakamura, M. (1968). *Modern Japanese Fiction 1868–1926*. Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, Tokyo.
- Nakamura, Takashi. (1979). *Batabia-jou Nisshi I-III*. Tokyo: Touyou Bunkou.
- Nawiyanto. (2010). *Matahari Terbit dan Tirai Bambu: Persaingan Dagang Jepang-Cina*. Yogyakarta: Penerbit Ombak.
- Nanyo Kyokai Zasshi [Journal of South Seas Association]. Tokyo: Nanyo KyokaL
- Nanyo Kyokai. (1932). *Nanyo Nankan [the South Seas Yearbook]*. (The Netherlands Indies Section). Taipei: Nanyo Kyokai.

- Okano, Shigezo. (1942). *Nanyou no Seikatsu Kiroku*. Tokyo: Nishikijou
- Roos, H. Dr. (1935). *Japan en De Industrialisatie Van Nederlandsch-Indië*. H.J. Paris. Amsterdam.
- Ryōsuke, Fuji. (1997). *Shinsō fukyū-ban kyōdo omocha jiten*, first edition 1971. Tokyodo Publishing.
- Shiraishi, Saya dan Shiraishi, Takashi. (1998). *Orang Jepang di Koloni Asia Tenggara*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- Shouwaki Nihon to Indoneshia. (1986). Tokyo: Keisoshobo.
- Spörry, Hanz. (1903). *Die Verwendung des Bambus in Japan und Katalog der Spörry'schen Bambus-Sammlung*. Zürich.
- Takeda, Shigesaburo (ed). (1978). *Jagatara Kanwa: Ran In Jidai Houjin no Ashiato*. Tanpa penerbit.
- Takei, Jiuro. 1929. *Nanyo [the South Seas]*. Tokyo: Kaigaisha.
- Yamaguchi, K. (1983), "Early Modern Economy (1868–1945)", KEJ, vol. 2, pp. 151–4.
- Yamamura, K. (1986), "The Meiji Land Tax Reform and Its Effects", in Jansen and Rozman 86, q.v., pp. 382–9.
- Yano, Toru. (1975). *Nanshin no Keifu*. Tokyo: Chuookoronsha.
- Yano, Toru. (1977). *Japan Involvement With Southeast Asia in the Period before World War II* – Kazue Tsutsumibayashi. Southeast Asian Studies
- Yoshimitsu, Yoshinaga. (1959). *Okayama no kyōdo omocha*. Nihon: kyōdo omocha no kai Okayama shibu.
- Veen, Ter. H.N. (1933). *De Sociale Beteekenis Der Industrialisatie Van Japan*. P. Noordhoff, Nv Gronigen-Batavia.
- Wilkinson, E. (1981). *Misunderstanding: Europe vs Japan*, Chuokoronsha, Tokyo.
- Zischka, Antoine. (1935). *Le Japon dans le monde, l'expansion nipponne 1854–1934*. N.V Het Nederlandsche Boekhuis, Tilburg.

Newspaper

- Algemeen Handelsblad Voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, January 13, 1927.
- Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, December 05, 1896.
- Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, February 12, 1898
- Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, September 02, 1905.
- De Indier*, September 23, 1918.
- De Koerier*, December 17, 1927.
- De Nieuwe Vorstenlanden Indisch Nieuws-en advertend'eblad*, September 18, 1928.
- De Preangerbode*, September 24, 1957.
- De Sumatra Post*, January 26, 1916.
- Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, November 25, 1911.
- Het nieuws van den dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, November 18, 1914.
- Jawa Nippou*, January 01, 1922.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22146/ear.28999>

Soerabaijasch handelsblad, March 23, 1906.

Sumatra-Bode, Juny 16, 1906.

Sumatra-Bode, November 11, 1909.

Touindo Nippou, August 20, 1940.