

Selections from NDL collections

## A *nishiki-e* calendar sent overseas from Japan: *Kawamata kenpu seiren kabushiki gaisha meiji yonjusannen karenda*

Chihiro Fujita, Library Support Division, Kansai-kan of the National Diet Library

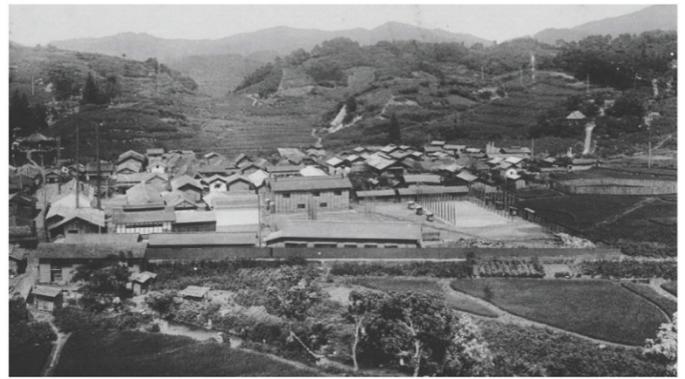
This article is a translation of the article in Japanese of the same title in *NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 681 (January 2018)*.



*Kawamata kenpu seiren kabushiki gaisha meiji yonjusannen karenda* (Year 1910 Calendar of Kawamata Silk Refining Co., Limited.). 1909, 13 pages, 37×25 cm, NDL Call Nos. VF6-F1-48 to 60. \* Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

Calendars are among what many people purchase in welcoming a new year. Since calendars are used and seen on a daily basis, companies and organizations in Japan often produce their own calendars and distribute them to their clientele.

The topic of this article is an example of such calendars. This calendar, featuring vividly colored *nishiki-e* (colored woodblock prints) accompanied by a calendar table both in English and Japanese, was sent from Kawamata Kenpu Seiren Kabushiki Gaisha (Kawamata Silk Refining Co., Ltd.), a manufacturer of *habutai* silk, to its overseas customers along with its export goods.



The factory of Kawamata Silk Refining Co., Ltd. in Kawamata Town of Fukushima Prefecture. This factory manufactured silk products for export.

Ogurusu, Kohei. *Fukushimaken shashincho* (Album of Fukushima Prefecture). Fukushima-ken, ed. September 1908. NDL Call No. 406-21.

\* Available in the [NDL Digital Collections](#)

The town of Kawamata in Fukushima prefecture was historically famous for sericulture and textile manufacturing. In the Meiji era, silk textiles produced in Kawamata came to be exported overseas via the Yokohama Port. However, since the town did not have a large factory where impurities could be systematically removed from raw silk, there were often complaints that the quality of the exported products was not stable.

Accordingly, Kawamata Silk Refining Co., Ltd. was established in 1899 by a merchant named Kutsuna Korejiro, who frequently visited Kawamata Town to trade silk fabrics. He established the company in response to requirements from the town mayor, with a capital of 25,000 yen collected from businessmen in Yokohama. Kutsuna was born in Iyo (Ehime prefecture) in 1864, and engaged in trade business in Yokohama after being apprenticed to a kimono retailer in Osaka. He later started his own business, and eventually made a success in the silk trade.



Trade mark of the Kawamata Silk Refining Co., Ltd.  
Illustrated at the left is a deer, and a stag is at its right.

The silk fabric produced at a large-scale factory of Kawamata Silk Refining Co., Ltd., with the same "shika jirushi (deer mark)" trade mark as printed in the calendar, gained a good reputation overseas for its high quality. In 1904, it was awarded at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in the silk refinement field for the first time in Japan.

The *nishiki-e* calendars began to be published in 1909 with the initiative of Kutsuna, and continued for four years. It can be assumed that the popularity around at that time of *hikifuda* (advertising handbills) for the New Year<sup>1</sup> and exported calendars made of *chirimen* paper (crepe-paper) underlaid his idea.

Featured in each month of the calendar of 1910 are *bijin-ga* (portraits of beautiful women) with the seal of Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847-1915). These prints resemble the ones in *Hanamoyo*, one of Kiyochika's past *bijin-ga* series. It is assumed that Akiyama Buemon of Kokkeido, one of the publishers of *Hanamoyo*, reused the same printing blocks in creating the calendar of Kawamata Silk Refining Co., Ltd. It is, therefore, likely that the material introduced in this article was made in the same way, but it is uncertain. There were other years when *bijin-ga* by Mizuno Toshikata and Ikeda Terukata were used. The trade mark and calendar are placed in the margin, and the company's name and advertising statement are at the bottom, both of which are printed in blue ink.

Our Kawamata Factory was honoured with the Visit of His Highness the Crown Prince of Japan on September 12th, 1908. We congratulate ourselves upon this event which is evident proof of the reputation of our factory.

**T**he "DEER and STAG" Pure Silk **S**urpasses all others in its refining Method.  
**h**e "DEER and STAG" Pure Silk **S**hows excellent lustre, when dyed or printed.  
**h**e "DEER and STAG" Pure Silk **S**uffers no change, no matter how long it may be kept.

THE Silk refined by our Company under our Trade Mark "Deer and Stag" has gained a well-earned reputation both at home and abroad for the superiority of our refining process. In addition to the above trade mark, we use the Pure Silk Guarantee Stamp and the Standard Weight Mark, for the purpose of notifying that the goods bearing them have been refined by our Pure Method, and guaranteeing that they have been subjected to No Loading process whatever, and we also now use the Length Guarantee Stamp, guaranteeing that the pieces bearing this stamp have been properly measured by us and are of correct lengths. Both the Stamp and the Mark are registered at the Patent Bureau of the Imperial Japanese Government.

The Characteristics of "Deer and Stag" Habutaye are as follows—  
 (I) "Deer and Stag" habutaye having been subjected to a lengthy boiling and thus made free from glutinous substances, dries, and then passed through a particular method of refining, will not increase in its weight whether it is boiled or washed for the purpose of dyeing etc.  
 (II) "Deer and Stag" habutaye is prepared with a particular attention not to absorb moisture from the atmosphere.  
 (III) "Deer and Stag" habutaye has a peculiar character to its coloring, materials of dyeing stuffs to itself and to increase the brilliancy after dyed.  
 (IV) "Deer and Stag" habutaye has a speciality not to become LAXENED IN ITS TEXTURE or not to become mappy or fuzzy.  
 (V) "Deer and Stag" habutaye being strong in its texture, is very convenient to deal while the silk weak in its texture is liable to be damaged in dealing the fabric.

Standard Weight Mark:  
 THREE AND A HALF MOMME (3 1/2)  
 THREE AND THREE FOURTHS MOMME (3 3/4)

日本鹿印

Taking this opportunity, we express our most sincere thanks to the Public for past favours and earnestly solicit the continuance of their patronage.

THE KAWAMATA KENPU SEIREN KABUSHIKI KAISHA,  
 (THE KAWAMATA SILK REFINING CO., LIMITED.)  
 PRESIDENT, K. KUTSUNA.  
 No. 7, Masagocho, Itchome, Yokohama, Japan.

The front cover of the calendar including an advertisement. It is written here that the Crown Prince (later Taisho Emperor) visited the factory in 1908, and enumerates the superior characteristics of *habutai* silk produced by the company.



The weight of *habutai* silk is represented by a unit called "momme (m)," and integrated in the design of the trade mark are the antlers of a deer.

The cover page, on the other hand, was newly drawn in producing the calendar, accompanied by a stamp of Mizuno Hidekata (1875-1944). The lady holding a strip of paper with the words "shika jirushi (deer mark)" is Koteko, the empress-consort of Emperor Sushun, who is known for the legend that she propagated sericulture and weaving to Kawamata. The harmonious portrait of stag and hind was drawn on the background as well as the

<sup>1</sup> Advertising prints distributed by retailers to their customers during the New Year's holidays. Auspicious drawings were printed in vivid colors, and sometimes accompanied by a calendar.



Some of our readers may wonder: "Why is this calendar owned by the NDL?" This material, in fact, was part of a collection donated to the NDL by Hotta Ryohei in 1987. Hotta was the fourth owner of Hotta Clock & Watch Co., Ltd. (now Hotta Corporation) which was established in 1879 in Nagoya. The Hotta collection consists of around 6,000 books and resources including a luxury catalogue of the collection of watches<sup>3</sup> and a huge amount of various advertising calendars and old calendars like the Ise-Goyomi calendar.

Some of the calendar collections of the NDL can be viewed in the digital exhibition "[The Japanese Calendar](#)".

At the beginning of a New Year, it may be nice to turn your attention afresh to calendars which are always at the side of our daily lives.

(Translated by Aiko Umeno and Shihoko Yokota)

#### Reference (in Japanese):

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<sup>3</sup> *Catalogue of the collection of watches, the property of J. Pierpont Morgan; compiled at his request by G. C. Williamson, LITT. D.* London: Priv. print. at the Chiswick press, 1912, NDL Call No. VF6-Y1.