Japanese chronicles claim that the first pottery was made in the year 660 B.C.; it was not, however, until the Christian era that the art made any considerable advances. In the year 1223 A.D., great improvements were made in manufacture and decoration of the ware. From that date to the sixteenth century the great potteries of Owari, Hizen, Mino, Kioto, Kaga, and Satsuma were established. The Rahn-Yaki, or crackled ware, was first made at Kioto, at the commencement of the sixteenth century. The best old Hizen ware, that which is still the most admired, was made at Arita Hizen, in 1580 to 1585; the old Satsuma dates from 1592. Consul-General Van Buren states that porcelain clays are found in nearly all parts of the country, and the different kinds are usually found in close proximity, and close to canals and rivers, which is of considerable advantage, as affording a means of transport. In all cases every variety of clay used in the manufacture of pottery is found in a natural state; there is no necessity to manufacture the quartzose or fusible clays as is done in other parts of the world, and which adds considerably to the cost of the ware. One of the peculiarities in the clay found in Japan is that it contains both the fusible and infusible materials in such proportions as to make a light, beautiful, translucent, and durable porcelain. At Arita, in Hizen, there is a clay found which contains 783/4 per cent, of silica, and 173/4 per cent, of alumina; from this clay is made the delicate, translucent eggshell ware, without the addition of any other matter. From an adjoining bluff a clay is taken which has 50 per cent, of silica, and 38 per cent, of alumina; from this the common porcelain is made.

Potter's clay is found in very large quantities in the provinces of Yamashiro, Hoki, Turoo Iyo, Hizen, Higo, Owari, Mikaera, Idyn, Musashi, and Mino. In the whole of Japan there are 283 localities where the clay is deposited; many of these only furnish inferior clays, but they are all fitted for use in some of the various kinds of pottery. These clays are thoroughly powdered by means of what is called "balance pounders," worked in some localities by water-power, but the work is often done by hand. The powder is then dried, and stored on boards or in flat boxes. This dough does not go through the process of fermentation. The shaping is almost exclusively done on the potter's wheel, which is set on a pivot working in a porcelain eye. As a rule, the wheel is turned by the potter himself, but in Hizen it is kept in motion by means of a band connected with its pivot and another wheel turned by a boy. In making dishes of other shape than round, a crude mould is sometimes used. After the clay has been shaped on the wheel, it is set away for drying, and usually in two or three days it is considered sufficiently dry for smoothing, which is done on the wheel with a sharp curved knife. The material is now made into "bisque," or biscuit, by a preliminary baking in small ovens, when it is ready for painting, if it is to be painted on the biscuit; if not, it is ready for the glazing. In either event it will then go to the large furnace for the final baking. The kilns for this purpose are always built on hill sides, and are joined together, increasing in size from the lower to the higher ones, and in
number from four to twenty-five; these kilns are so constructed that the draught is from
the lowest one, in addition to which each kiln has its own firing place. The result of this
construction is that the upper ones are by far the most heated, and the ware is arranged
accordingly; that which requires the least baking, in the lower kiln, and that which
requires the greatest heat, in the upper. These connecting kilns have the merit of being
heat saving, but they are usually small and badly constructed, and the heat in none of
them is uniform.

The glaze is made from the silicious clay and potash extracted from wood ashes. This
potash is not a pure white, and this accounts for the dirty color usually to be observed in
unpainted Japanese ware. In different districts the painting varies. For instance, in Owari,
the greater part of the ware is painted a cobalt blue—the cobalt ore being found in the
bluffs near the clay deposits, and is used for painting the cheaper wares, and for this
purpose German cobalt is also employed. The painting with cobalt is generally done on
the biscuit before glazing. In several districts a very handsome ware is made, and painted
on the glaze. For this kind of painting the colors are mixed with a silicate of lead and
potash, and baked the third time in a small furnace at a low temperature. The coloring
oxides in use are those of copper, cobalt, iron, antimony, manganese, and gold. Japanese
porcelain painting may be divided into two categories, decorative and graphic; the first is
used to improve the vessel upon which it is placed, and this class includes all the ware
except that of the province of Kaga, which would come under the head of graphic, as it
delineates all the trades, occupations, sports, customs, and costumes of the people, as well
as the scenery, flora, and fauna of the country. "Owari ware" is made in the province of
that name; it is not as translucent, but stronger and more tenacious than some of the
Hizen manufacture.

The principal potteries are at a village called Seto, twelve miles from the sea; in this
village there are more than 200 kilns. The ware is mostly painted a cobalt blue, and is
merely of a decorative kind, consisting of branches of trees, grass, flowers, birds, and
insects, all these being copied by the artist from nature. All the Owari ware is true hard
porcelain, and is strong and durable. In Hizen, a number of wares are manufactured, the
best known kind being the "Eurari," which is made at Arita, but painted at Eurari. The
colors in use are red, blue, green, and gold; these are combined in various proportions,
but, as a rule, the red predominates. Generally the surface of the vessel is divided into
medallions of figures, which alternately have red, blue, or white back-ground, with
figures in green or blue and gold.

The egg-shell porcelain sold at Nagasaki is made in this province from Arita clay, and
this is made from clay with no admixture of fusible matter except that contained by the
clay naturally. The province of Satsuma is noted for crackled ware. It is only within a
very few years that large vases have been manufactured, and in earlier days the old ware
was confined to small vessels. The glaze is a silicate of alumina and potash, and the best
ware has a complete network of the finest crackles; the painting is of birds and flowers,
and noted for its delicate lines of green, red, and gold.

In Kioto, the ware manufactured is very similar to that produced in Satsuma, but it is
lighter and more porous; the decorations are also nearly the same, being of birds and flowers. There is a description of ware made in Kioto, called "Eraku," the whole body of which is covered with a red oxide of iron, and over this mythical figures of gold are traced. That produced in Kagja is _faience_, and in the style of painting is unlike any other in Japan, the predominating color being a light red, used with green and gold. The designs with which it is profusely decorated are trees, grasses, flowers, birds, and figures of all classes of people, with their costumes, occupations, and pastimes. The "Banko" ware is made at the head of the Owari Bay; it is an unglazed stone-ware, very light and durable, made on moulds in irregular shapes, and decorated with figures in relief. On the island of Awadji, a delicate, creamy, crackled, soft paste porcelain is made. The figures used in decoration are birds and flowers, but outlined by heavy, dark lines.

Consul Van Buren is of opinion that, at no distant day, Japan will be one of the foremost competitors in the pottery markets of the world, on account of the great variety and excellence of the clays, their proximity to the sea, the cheapness of labor, and the beauty and originality of the decorations. Already this important industry has been greatly stimulated by the foreign demand, and by the success of Japanese exhibitors at the Exhibitions of Vienna, Philadelphia, and Paris.

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