

SOEI VOICE

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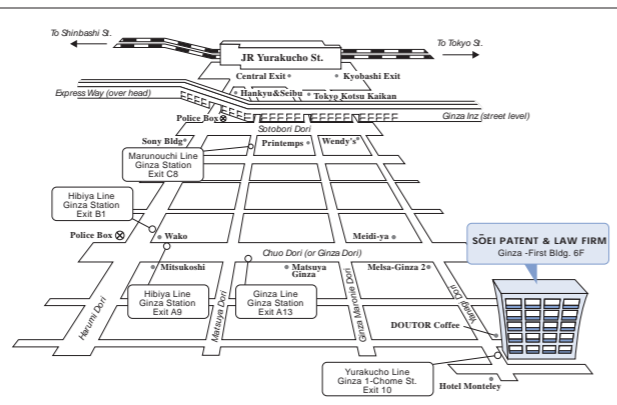
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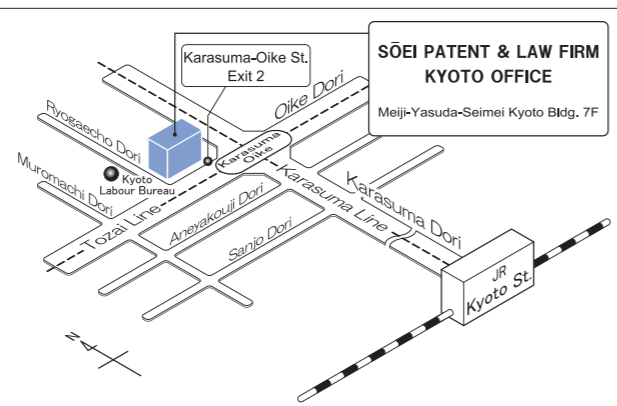
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SOEI News

Our Success Rate in Invalidation Trials and Before the Intellectual Property High Court Patent: 93%, Trademark: 68%, Intellectual Property High Court: 75%.

by Yoshiki Hasegawa , President



by Yoshiki Hasegawa

<SOEI WINS THREE CASES OUT OF FOUR CASES>

With 62 patent/trademark attorneys and 3 attorneys at law, we have been outstanding successful in litigation in matters related to patents, designs, trademarks, and unfair competition. Pie Graphs 1, 2, and 3 shown our achievements.

Pie Graph 1 shows that we have won 93% (13 wins, 1 loss) of the patent invalidation trials that we have filed before the Japanese Patent Office (JPO). Pie Graph 2 shows that we have won 68% (17 wins, 8 losses) of the trademark invalidation trials that we have filed before the JPO. Pie Graph 3 shows that we have won 75% (6 wins, 2 losses) of the suits filed before the Intellectual Property High Court against appeal (trial) decisions by the JPO. All of the cases are listed on the Soei website.(refer to the bottom of P2)

<OUR UNIQUE SYSTEM IS BEHIND THE HIGH WINNING PERCENTAGE>

Our extremely high winning percentage is not only due to the wide experience and strong skills of our patent attorneys and attorneys at law. Rather, Soei has a unique system that does not exist in other firms. We call this system “ ‘six eyes see more than four’ system.” This system assigns three experts to the case: one is responsible for the case and two others who work in cooperation with the responsible expert.

For example, in a patent invalidation

One side wins and the other side loses in patent or trademark invalidation trials, and, in the long term, decisions by the court or the appeal board in the JPO should be in favor of the demandant about half the time and the demandee the other half. Therefore, our winning percentage is extremely high; the winning percentage of 93% in the invalidation trials is remarkable.

This system is based an old Japanese saying, “If three people cooperate, they have Manjusri’ s wisdom.” (Manjusri is the bodhisattva associated with wisdom.) In this system, role of each expert is carefully determined so that they can work efficiently as a team, and it enables us to achieve our remarkable litigation success without much increase in cost (hourly charge).

trial, the three experts listed below work together:

- 1. An attorney with a technical background and wide experience in patent office procedures,
2. A patent attorney specialized in the field of patents, designs or trademarks, and
3. A patent attorney who has been handling invalidation proceedings as an appeal examiner in the patent office or as an examiner for the High Court

This system is based an old Japanese saying, “If three people cooperate, they have Manjusri’ s wisdom.” (Manjusri is the bodhisattva associated with wisdom.) In this system, role of each expert is carefully determined so that they can work efficiently as a team, and it enables us to achieve our remarkable litigation

success without much increase in cost (hourly charge).

If the client accepts the increased time charges (about 30-50 percent) with this system, the client can expect to win three out of four cases. We believe that it is not very difficult to decide between reduced cost or improved winning percentage.

INVALIDATION TRIAL(PATENT)

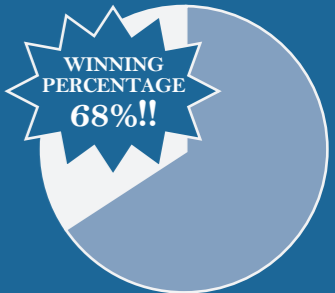
Table with 8 columns: Demandant, Demandee, Type, Filing date of the Request for a Trial, Trial number, Date the Decision was issued, Result, Subject Patent No. Contains 13 rows of patent trial data.



Pie Graph 1

INVALIDATION TRIAL(TRADEMARK)

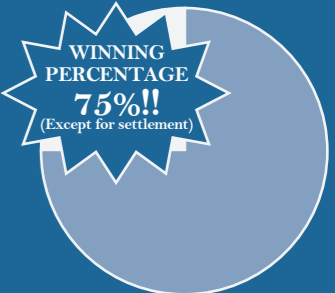
Table with 8 columns: Demandant, Demandee, Type, Filing date of the Request for a Trial, Trial number, Date the Decision was issued, Result, Subject Patent No. Contains 23 rows of trademark trial data.



Pie Graph 2

LITIGATION RESCINDING THE TRIAL DECISION

Table with 7 columns: Year, Category, Plaintiff, Defendant, Case Number, Date of Judgement, Result. Contains 16 rows of litigation rescinding data.



Pie Graph 3

- cases show wins of SOEI
• URL : http://www.soei.com/english/about/services_available/legal_affairs.php

Patent

Patent Prosecution and Examination in Japan

by Kazuhiro Yamaguchi



by Kazuhiro Yamaguchi

According to Japan Patent Office Annual Report 2009¹, it took an average of 28.5 months for the applicant to receive a first action (such as a decision to grant a patent or a Notice of Reasons for Refusal) after having filed a request for

examination. For applicants who wish to acquire patent rights more rapidly in Japan, this article introduces three useful systems which accelerate the patent examination process.

1. ACCELERATED EXAMINATION SYSTEM

In an effort to meet applicants' needs, the JPO revised the accelerated examination system in 2004, and it has gaining sufficient popularity that the number of petitions reached 8,863 in 2008².

As prescribed by the JPO, the applicant needs to conduct a prior art search and provide a comparison between the claimed invention and a cited reference.

(a) Requirements

The applicant needs to satisfy one of the following requirements:

- (1) Internationally filed applications (The Japanese application is part of an international patent family);
- (2) Working related applications (The invention claimed in the application has already been put into practice or will be put into practice within two years);
- or
- (3) Applications filed by Small-and-Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), individuals, universities, etc. (Mainly used by Japanese applicants.)

(1) Internationally filed applications:

The applicant may omit the prior art search and comparison if a search result from a foreign patent office can be cited.

(2) Working related applications: The

applicant must conduct a prior art search and provide a comparison.

(3) Applications filed by SMEs, individuals, universities, etc.: The applicant may be exempt from conducting a prior art search and providing a comparison if the disclosure and discussion of the prior art in the specification can be utilized.

(c) Time to First Action

On average, the applicant will receive the first action about two months after filing the petition.

(b) Prior Art Search by the Applicant

2. SUPER ACCELERATED EXAMINATION SYSTEM

In October 2008, the JPO established a pilot program called the "Super

Accelerated Examination System" that examines applications more rapidly².

(a) Requirements

The application MUST satisfy both of the following requirements:

- (1) An internationally filed application; and
- (2) A working related application; and CANNOT BE a Japanese national phase of a PCT application (That is, the application must be a "Paris-route" application in typical case of a foreign applicant).

(b) Prior Art Search by the Applicant

The applicant must conduct a prior art search and provide a comparison between a claimed invention and a reference cited in the search result. If a search result from a foreign patent office is available, it should be cited.

(c) Time to First Action

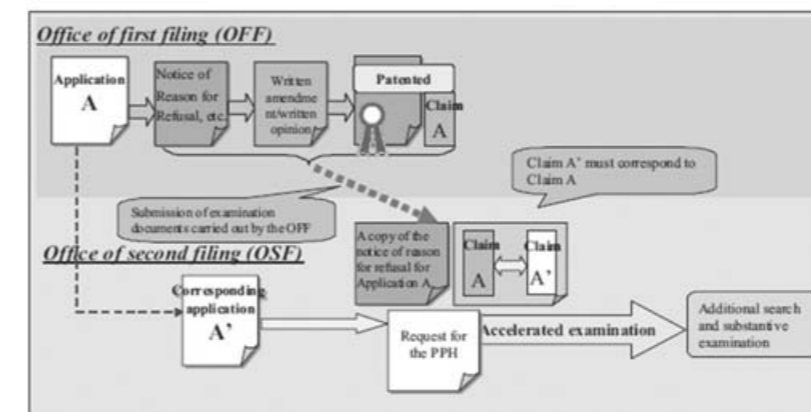
The applicant will receive the first action within one month after filing the petition. However, a foreign applicant must respond to the office action within two months (30 days in case of a domestic applicant).

3. PATENT PROSECUTION HIGHWAY

If a corresponding application has received a notice of allowance for in one of the participating countries³, the applicant

can utilize the Patent Prosecution Highway (PPH) system outlined below.

Outline of the Patent Prosecution Highway



Source: Japan Patent Office Annual Report 2009 (JPO)

Under this system, the applicant will receive a first action two to three months after the petition is granted. More detailed information on the PPH system

can be found at the JPO special website <http://www.jpo.go.jp/torikumi_e/t_torikumi_e/patent_highway_e.htm>.

REFERENCES

1. Japan Patent Office Annual Report 2009 Part 5 Statistical Data (September 2009), available at <http://www.jpo.go.jp/shiryoku_e/toushin_e/kenkyukai_e/annual_report2009.htm>
2. Japan Patent Office Annual Report

- 2009 Part 2 Government Efforts in Intellectual Property Activities Chapter 2 Efforts Related to Patents (September 2009), *ibid*.
3. US, KR, GB, DE, DK, FI, RU, AT, SG, HU (as of September, 2009)

Patent

Divisional Applications in Japan

by Yasuki Yanagi



by Yasuki Yanagi

When a pending patent application comprises two or more inventions, the applicant may file a divisional application to seek patent protection for each of the inventions. The divisional application must fulfill the formal and substantive requirements.

The formal requirements consist of subjective requirements and time constraints on divisional application. The

main subjective requirement is that the applicant for the divisional application must be identical to that for the original application. The time requirements depend on the filing date of the original application. The table below provides details for original applications filed before March 31, 2007 and original application filed on or after April 1, 2007.

(a) Applications filed on or before March 31, 2007	(I) At the time amendments to the description or the like can be made * After a Notice of Final Rejection, an Appeal against Final Rejection must be filed, and any divisional applications must be filed simultaneously with the Appeal against Final Rejection
(b) Applications filed on or after April 1, 2007	(I) At the time amendments to the description or the like can be made * The same as in (a) above. (II) Within 30 days of the date of a Notice of Allowance Notes: * (II) does not apply to a decision to grant issued by the Appeal Board in an Appeal Against Final Rejection. * Even within the 30-day period, a divisional application cannot be filed if the registration fees have been paid and the patent right registered. (III) Within 3 months (4 months for foreign applications) from the date of the first Final Rejection

When a divisional application is filed within the period in which amendments can be made, the substantive requirements for a divisional application are as described below.

(i) The claimed inventions of the divisional application shall not comprise all of the inventions described in the description of the original application immediately prior to the division of the application.

(ii) Matters described in the description of the divisional application shall be within the scope of matters described in the description of the original application as originally filed.

When a divisional application is filed within the period in which amendments cannot be made (such as the situations defined in items (b) II and III), the

following restriction applies in addition to (i) and (ii) above.

(iii) Matters described in the description of the divisional application shall be within the scope of matters described in the description of the original application immediately prior to the filing of the divisional application.

JPO requests applicant to submit an explanatory document when filing a divisional application that explains the divisional application fulfills the legal requirements. Although the JPO asks applicants to submit the explanation, it is not mandatory. Thus, the JPO will not issue a Notice of Reasons for Rejection even the explanatory document is not submitted. However, the explanatory document facilitates the examination, and the JPO considers it to be useful.

Patent

Non-Acceptable Claim Amendment (“Shift Amendment”)

by Makoto Tamura



by Makoto Tamura

Japanese Patent Law Article 17bis (4) prohibits amendments to the claims which change the special technical feature of the claimed invention, the so called “Shift Amendments.” The purpose of Article 17bis (4) is to prevent delays in the examination by making additional prior art searches unnecessary. Article 17bis (4)

applies to applications filed on or after April 1, 2007, and, therefore, we recently started receiving office actions with respect to those applications. Thus, a clear understanding of Article 17bis (4) is becoming more and more important for all applicants and attorneys who are handling Japanese patent prosecutions.

1. JAPANESE PATENT LAW ARTICLE 17BIS (4)

“When the applicant amends the claims in the period designated in a Notice of Article 48-7* or a Notice of Reasons for Rejection or at the same time of filing an Appeal against Final Rejection, the invention described in the amended claims shall be of a group of inventions which meet the requirements of Unity of Invention set forth in Article 37 in relation to the invention described in the claims before the amendment and examined by the examiner whether or not

the invention is patentable in the previous Notice of Reasons for Rejection.”

*Failure to disclose prior art information

Note: Unity of Invention in the Japanese Practice is same as that of the Patent Cooperative Treaty. Hence, to satisfy the requirements of Article 17bis (4), there must be a technical relationship between inventions before and after amendments involving one or more of the same or corresponding special technical features which define a contribution over the prior art.

2. EXAMINATION PROCEDURE IN THE JAPANESE PATENT OFFICE

Japanese Patent Examination Guidelines provide some examples showing the application of Article 17bis (4). Example 1 is the most common. In Example 2, the examiner cannot find a special technical feature in claim 1 but does find one in a later claim. In Example 3, the examiner cannot find a special technical feature in any of the claims. [Example 1]

The original claims are as follows:
Claim 1: Quick-drying ink for an ink-jet printer containing specific component X

Claim 2: An ink-jet printer characterized by having a nozzle of a special shape that enables the user to adjust the amount of ink being expelled.

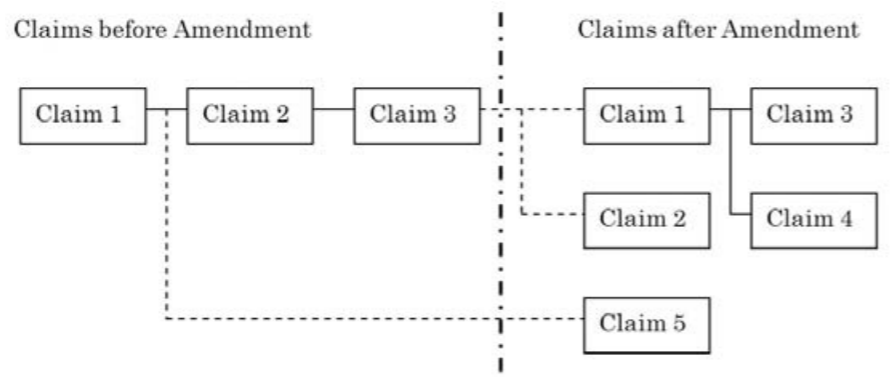
In the first Notice of Reasons for Rejection, the examiner pointed out that Claim 1 has a special technical feature, but does not have inventive step.

Claim 2 does not meet the requirements of Unity of Invention (Article 37) because it does not share a special technical feature with claim 1.

In response to the Notice, the applicant amended the claims as follows:
 Amended Claim 1 (previously claim 2):
 An ink-jet printer characterized by having a nozzle of a special shape that enables the user to adjust the amount of ink being expelled.

In the second Notice of Reasons for Rejection, the examiner will point out that Amended Claim 1 does not meet the requirements of Article 17bis (4) in relation to the previous claim 1 before amendment. As a result, the examiner will not examine amended claim 1.

[Example 2]



NOTE: The solid lines mean the claim on the right depends on the claim to the left.
 The dotted lines mean the claim on the right includes all components of the claim on the left.

Before amendment there are three claims, Claim 2 depends on Claim 1 and Claim 3 depends on Claim 2. After amendment, Claims 3 and 4 depend on Claim 1. The dotted lines connecting the claims before amendment with the claims after amendment indicate that the claim after amendment contains all the components of the claim to which it is connected before amendment.

If the examiner cannot find any special technical feature in claim 1, the examiner selects the claim having the smallest claim number from among the claims which include all components described in claim 1. The examiner then determines whether the selected claim has a special technical feature. If not, the examiner repeats the same claim selection procedure until he finds one having a special technical feature in one of the claims.

In the first Notice of Reasons for Rejection, the examiner determined that Claims 1 and 2 do not have a special

technical feature and lack novelty. Claim 3 has a special technical feature and novelty, but does not have an inventive step.

In response to the first Notice, the applicant amended the claims as shown in right side of the above figure. Although amended Claim 5 shares its components with Claim 1, Claim 1 lacks a technical feature, and, consequently amended Claim 5 and the original Claim 1 cannot share the technical feature necessary for unity of invention under Article 17bis (4). As a result, the examiner will not examine amended claim 5.

On the other hand amended Claims 1-4 share the same or corresponding special technical features with Claim 3 before amendment, and therefore, they meet the requirements of Article 17bis (4). As a result, the examiner will examine amended claim 1-4 for novelty, inventive step and other requirements.

[Example 3]

Please refer to the same figure used to explain Example 2.

In the first Notice of Reasons for Rejection, the examiner pointed out as follows.

Claims 1-3 do not have a special technical feature and lack novelty.

In response to the first Notice of Reasons for Rejection, the applicant amended the claims as described in right side of the above figure. Because the examiner failed to find a special technical feature in the claims as filed, it will be logically impossible for the claims after amendment to share a special technical feature with the claims before amendment. Nonetheless, the JPO Guidelines authorize examiners to

continue the examination if a) none of the claims before amendment have a special technical feature and b) the special technical feature added by amendment is fully supported by the specification as filed.

Assuming the examiner finds a special technical feature in amended claim 1, amended Claims 1, 3 and 4 meet the requirements of Article 17bis (4) in relation to claim 3 set out before amendment. As a result, the examiner examines amended claim 1, 3 and 4 for novelty, inventive step and other requirements.

However, amended Claims 2 and 5 do not meet the requirements of Article 17bis (4) in relation to claim 3 set out before amendment. As a result, the examiner will not examine the amended claims 2 and 5.

3. REMARKS

If the examiner rejects the amended claims under Article 17bis (4), the applicant is forced to file a divisional application to pursue a patent for the amended claims, thereby increasing the cost to the applicant. To avoid rejection under Article 17bis (4), we would like to suggest that the applicants review the claims before starting examination, for example, when filing a request for examination. In the review, if the independent claims are too broad, the

applicant should limit them. Moreover, if the applicant has lost interest in some of the claims, he should delete them. Furthermore, if a claim with larger claim number (e.g. 50) has become more important than claims with smaller claim number (e.g. 10 to 15), the applicants should modify the claims sequence by exchanging claim numbers, because the examiner will examine the claims with smaller claim number first.

Patent

The Doctrine of Equivalents

Takaaki Ozeki

The Supreme Court ruling of February 24, 1998 established the following requirements for a product accused of infringing on a patented invention to be deemed to be equivalent to the patent invention when the claim language does not literally cover the accused product:

- (1) The point of difference is not an essential part of the patent invention;
- (2) The substitution can achieve the objective of the patent invention;
- (3) A person skilled in the art could have easily conceived the substitution at the time of the infringement;
- (4) The accused product is not an obvious modification of the prior art known before the application of the patent; and
- (5) The prosecution history does not explicitly exclude the accused product from the scope of the patented invention.

Even though the Supreme Court officially acknowledged the doctrine of equivalents, the Japanese courts have been rather reluctant to adopt the doctrine of equivalents. In most of the cases where the patent holder has asserted the doctrine of equivalents, the courts have found that either requirement (1) or (3) was not satisfied.

The IP High Court ruling of June 29, 2009 reversed the Tokyo District Court decision that held that requirement (1) had not been fulfilled, found infringement based on the doctrine of equivalents and remanded the case to determine compensation for the infringement. In the claim construction, the patented invention claimed in JP3725481 ("the '481 patent") relating to a golf driver head having an outer shell consisting of metal plates ("metal shell members") and a fiber reinforced plastic plate ("FRP shell member")

was interpreted to specify a configuration wherein a metal shell member (11) and FRP shell member (21) are partially overlapped and bonded to each other in the overlapping region, and sewn together by a fiber reinforced plastic thread ("FRP thread") (22), which is bonded to the FRP shell member (21), through at least two through-holes (13) formed in the metal shell member (11), as shown in Fig. 2 of the '481 patent.

In the accused product, a metal shell member (2) is sandwiched by upper and lower FRP shell members (10, 9) and these are sewn together through single through-hole (7) by separate FRP threads (8), as shown in Figs. 3 and 4 depicting the accused product.

In its evaluation of requirement (1), the IP High Court found that the essential feature of '481 patent to be the reinforcing of the bond between the metal shell member (11) and FRP shell member (21) by sewing them together with the FRP thread (22) bonded to the FRP shell member (21), and the number of through-holes through which each of the FRP threads (22) passes is not an essential to the '481 patent. Furthermore, requirement (3) was satisfied because the substitution adopted in the accused product was easily conceivable at the time of the infringement. Contrary to the previous decisions imposing a high evidentiary burden on the patentee with respect to requirement (3), the IP High Court found the requirement (3) satisfied without any supporting evidence.

This IP High Court ruling may reverse the previous anti-patent trend, and pave the way for bold infringement decisions based on the doctrine of equivalents in patent infringement litigation in Japan.

IP Law

A Useful Option to Block Infringing Products

by Tomoya Kurokawa

The royal road to keep products that infringe intellectual property rights (IPR) off the market, is a lawsuit and an injunction. However, filing a lawsuit before the court and obtaining a court decision is both expensive and time consuming.

On the other hand, border enforcement

at Japanese Customs has recently become more efficient; it proceeds quickly and the procedure is simple. This article explains how to prevent products that infringe IPR from entering into Japan by using border enforcement by Japanese Customs.

INITIATION OF THE BORDER ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURE

Although Customs can block the importation of products that infringe IPR sua sponte, Customs usually initiates the procedure in response to an application by a right holder, such as the owner of a registered patent, design or trademark, or the owner of a copyright. The right holder may file an application to block the release of the goods suspected of infringing an IPR together with (1) a copy of the Register and the Publication, (2) prima-facie evidence of infringement, e.g. a sample or a photo of infringing product, (3) an explanation on how to distinguish the genuine product from an infringing one.

IMPORTATION ALERT PROCEDURES

When the application is accepted, an import alert is put in place for two years (renewable). During the import alert, when Customs find products suspected of infringing the IPR, they send a notice to both the right holder and the importer and ask them to submit their opinions and evidence. Customs will examine the opinions and evidence and will decide whether the products infringe the IPR about one month after it issued the notice. At the request of the right holder and/or importer, the Advisory Board will hold a hearing. In

Once filed, the application is published on the Customs' website and possible importers notified. Any interested party (including possible importers) may file arguments within ten days (extendible for five business days) of the publication by Customs.

If there are no arguments by an interested party, the decision of acceptance follows shortly, usually about one month from the date of application. If an interested party files arguments, there is a hearing by the Advisory Board, and Customs issues its decision of acceptance (or rejection) about two months after the initial application.

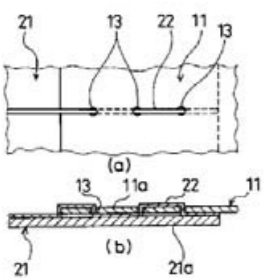
this case, it takes two months from the notice to the decision (a defeated importer can file an appeal). If Customs finds that products infringe the IPR, importer must discard the products voluntarily or Customs will confiscate them. Back loading the products is not allowed if the IPR that is infringed is a trademark or covered by copyright. For other infringed IPRs, back loading of the products is allowed only if the products do not infringe the same IPR in the destination.

There is a simplified procedure to decide whether the products infringe a trademark

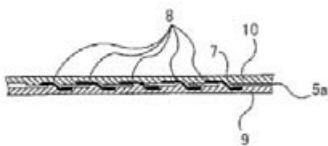


by Takaaki Ozeki

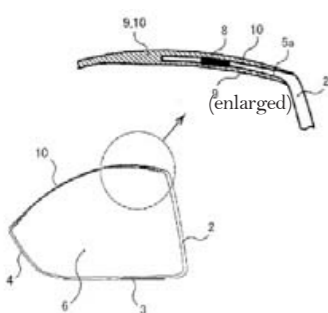
[Fig. 2 of '481 Patent]



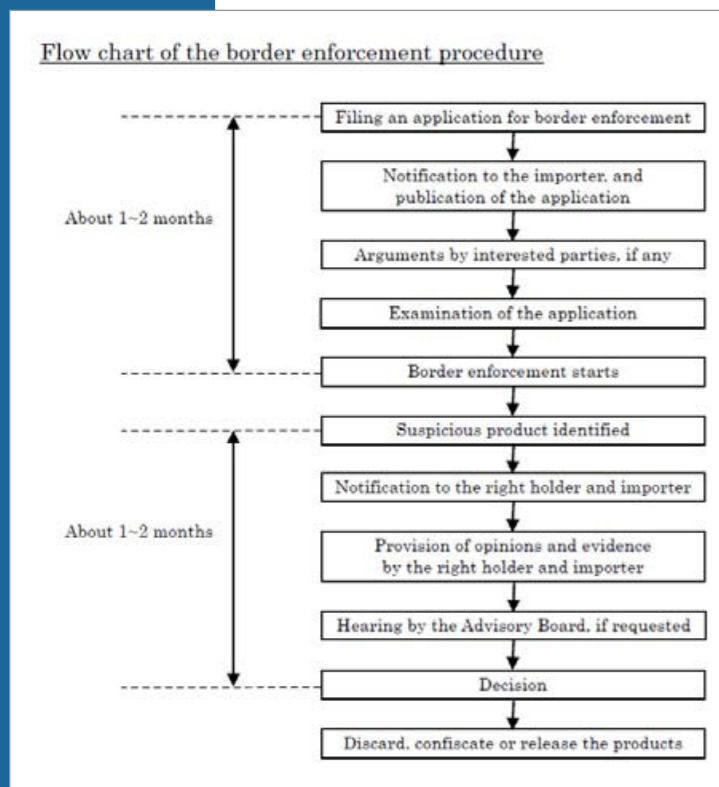
[Fig. 3 of the alleged product]



[Fig. 4 of the alleged product]



by Tomoya Kurokawa



right or a copyright. If the importer does not dispute the alleged infringement, Customs does not ask the parties to submit opinions and evidence.

As explained above, border enforcement by Japanese Customs is sometimes a more timely and cost effective way to prevent products that infringe an IPR from entering the Japanese market. IPR owners should consider whether to utilize this procedure either before suing the other party for infringement or together with the filing of a lawsuit.

another ladle for molten metal that has a shape between D1137667 and D1137869 is within the scope of the right of D1137667 and D1137869. Therefore, the owner of several designs registered as Related Designs can confidently work the registered design right and a third party will find it difficult to use a design similar to the registered designs.

In fact, the Japanese court found infringement because a ladle for molten metal with a downward-pointing tube with two rings is similar to D1137667. If the plaintiff had had only D1137667, it would have been quite difficult to persuade the judge that D137667 and the allegedly infringing product were similar to each other. But D1137667 has an upward-pointing tube and D1137869 has a downward-pointing tube, and since they are registered as Related Designs, the Japanese court found that although the allegedly infringing product has a downward tube, it is similar to D1137667 with an upward tube.

When the owner of a Related Design also has a Partial Design right, the combination provides even more effective the protection. The right holder of D1137667 and D1137869 also owns D1129216 registered as Partial Design for the tube of D1137869. Further, the owner of D1137869 has extensively registered his designs, thereby extending the scope of his rights. Therefore, third parties are not able to use any design which is similar to the registered designs and the owner can monopolize the market of the ladles for molten metal.

Design

A Strategy for Broader Designs Protection in Japan

by Ken-ichi Tsukahara



by Ken-ichi Tsukahara

Applicants can develop a strategy to obtain broader protection for their designs by taking advantage of the Related Design System, the Partial Design System and other features of the Japanese design practice.

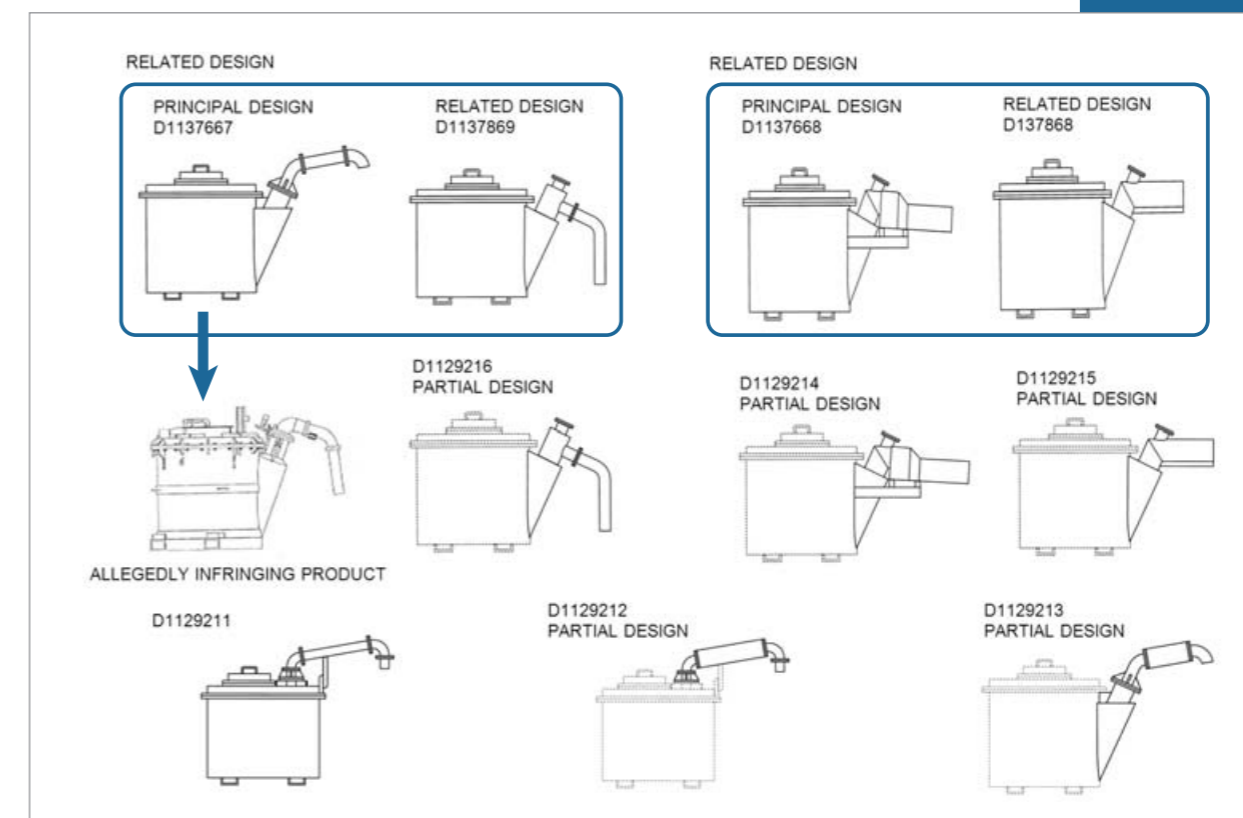
Unlike the United States, O.H.I.M, and many other countries, a separate application is necessary for each design in the Japanese design practice. Therefore, it is necessary to file a separate application for each design to register multiple designs in Japan. But, in the Japanese design practice, it is also impossible to register similar designs independently under Article 9 of the Design Law. However, Article 10 of the Design Law provides for Related Designs that allows applicants to register a design that is

similar to another design, Article 9 notwithstanding. The Related Design System corresponds to the Similar Design System in Korea and the Associated Design System in Taiwan.

The Related Design System is also useful because it not only allows the registration of similar designs but also helps to define the scope of the right.

For example, D1137667 and D1137869 are registered as Related Designs. The articles are ladles for handling molten metal. These ladles distribute molten metal through the tube that looks a little like an elephant's nose.

The fact that D1137667 and D1137869 are registered as Related Designs means that



Come to Japan

Furoshiki—Japanese Wrapping Cloth

by Saya Otani

We have a "wrapping" culture in Japan. This culture is based on our belief that we express our thoughtful attention and respect to those to whom we give our gifts (monetary or otherwise) by carefully "wrapping" the gifts.

The foundation of the Japanese wrapping culture is the furoshiki, or Japanese wrapping cloth. A furoshiki is a piece of cloth which comes in a variety of sizes and patterns, and we use it for many purposes such as wrapping clothes when traveling and carrying a gift when going to visit our friends.

A furoshiki can wrap items of many different shapes and sizes, and there are also many different ways of wrapping things using a furoshiki, for example: the "errands wrap" made by tying opposite corners of a furoshiki together to secure a package and make a handle, the "gift wine bottle wrap" comes in handy when bringing a bottle of wine, the "rose wrap" decorates a gift with a rose-shaped knot and the "watermelon wrap" allows you to carry a ball-shaped object like a watermelon. A Furoshiki is useful, durable and has its own unique charm. Another appeal of a furoshiki is that when it has finished its job, you can fold it up compactly in seconds.

The origin of the word furoshiki is uncertain. One legend suggests the furoshiki (literally meaning "bath spread") got its name from the historical fact that feudal lords at the end of the Muromachi period (1338-1573) used a piece of cloth to undress on and to bundle their clothes when they took a bath. Later, with the popularization of public baths in the Edo period (1600-1868), the use of the furoshiki

spread to ordinary people as well.

The furoshiki has been used for a long time as part of the Japanese culture of "wrapping," and, as environmental issues become a matter of serious concern in today's society, the reusable furoshiki continues to attract a lot of attention as a perfect eco-friendly item.

Lately, Mr. Isao Yokoyama (age 30), affectionately called the "furoshiki prince," has been appearing on TV and magazines as an evangelist for furoshiki culture, quietly boosting the popularity of the furoshiki. His way of utilizing furoshiki is novel and stylish as well as practical, making the furoshiki not just another fad but something here to stay. His furoshiki workshops appear to be popular as well.

After I heard his story, I revisited the furoshiki, rediscovered its benefits, started to learn different ways of wrapping things and put the furoshiki to practical use. More than anything else, even if times and ways of thinking may change, I will always remember thoughtful attention, courtesy and gratitude on which "wrapping" is based and continue to treasure this time-honored expression of Japanese traditional culture.



Come to Japan

Kushikatsu—Specialty Cuisine from Osaka's Shinsekai

by Toshihiko Hama

Located near Kyoto, the center of Japanese culture, Osaka has thrived as a distribution center for food and commodities. It also boasts its own unique gastronomic culture. You can enjoy such a variety of meals in Osaka that it can be described as a city where you can "eat yourself out of house and home." One part of Osaka where this saying is particularly true is the area called Shinsekai, which has its own distinctive atmosphere, tinged with an old-fashioned, nostalgic air, as if the area has been left behind during the period of high economic growth. Shinsekai was a popular, folksy entertainment district, but lately it has become a tourist spot where people can enjoy the retro atmosphere of downtown areas from the '50s and '60s. Its main street is bustling with restaurants, each serving a variety of dishes, of which kushikatsu is the most popular.

Kushikatsu is a dish that consists of skewered beef, seafood, vegetables, and sausages that is first dipped in a batter of flour, beaten eggs and bread crumbs and then deep-fat fried. Holding the skewer, you dip the kushikatsu in sauce right before eating it. Freshly-fried, crispy kushikatsu dipped in a spicy sauce goes great with beer.

Every weekend, families with children and tourists form long lines in front of the popular Kushikatsu eateries in Osaka's Shinsekai. Visiting Shinsekai to try kushikatsu for myself, I couldn't help but get drawn into one of the lines. Many kushikatsu eateries have only counter seats, and the sauce containers are placed

on the counter. Here, you have to keep one thing in mind: how you go about applying sauce to your kushikatsu.

Rather than pouring the sauce over your kushikatsu, you are supposed to dip your kushikatsu directly in the sauce in the container. For hygienic reasons, you should never dip your kushikatsu in the sauce after you have taken a bite since you share this sauce with the people sitting next to you. (A sign on the wall says: "NO DOUBLE DIPPING!") You have only one chance to dip your kushikatsu in the sauce container.

If you fail to get enough sauce on your kushikatsu on your first (and only) attempt, the (all-you-can-eat) cabbage that you get as a side dish will come to your rescue. All you have to do is dip your cabbage in the sauce and then transfer the sauce from the cabbage to your kushikatsu: problem solved! Stay cool and you'll overcome this crisis.

Caution: Kushikatsu eateries (called kushiage-ya) can be found all over Japan and the rules for eating kushikatsu may vary from place to place. Therefore, it is advisable to observe the people around you before you start eating.

