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Calico Printing Industry and Copyright Protection in the Early Victorian Period: In Connection with Overseas Markets

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The aim of this article is to examine the British Industrial Revolution from the viewpoint of industrial designs. I pay attention to the discussion on the Copyright of Design Act 1842, so that I can throw a new light on the aspects of the calico printing industry in Manchester, and the overseas markets strategy in early Victorian Britain.

During the period of 1837 to 1841 the British economy was in a depression, when some manufacturers got distressed by piracy and expressed concerns about decrease in sales. As a solution to this difficult situation, they petitioned for copyright protection. Consequently, Parliament amended the Copyright of Design Act in 1839, which gave the printing designs of silk and wool manufactures twelve months protection. However, as for the protection of calico printing products, it remained a mere three months as before. Some calico printers, therefore, petitioned for the twelve months protection just as silk and wool manufactures had been allowed. In the face of pervasive piracy, they beseeched Parliament to strengthen its ineffective design copyright laws. Other calico printers however, opposed the petition earnestly. Some thought they didn't need the longer term protection at all. This article examines the opposing opinions and reveals the key points.

First, I investigated overall picture of the calico printers in the 19th century Manchester. There were about ninety to a hundred printers in Manchester at that time. The majority of them bought or obtained patterns for calico manufacturing from French designers. There was a viable business network between