

The Protection of Cultural Properties in Japan (1)

*Donatella Failla **

Introductory Note by *Stacey Steele*

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* This essay has been revised and translated into English by the author from its original Italian version: D. FAILLA, *La Tutela dei Beni Culturali in Giappone*, in: G. COFRANCESCO (ed.), *I beni culturali. Profili di diritto comparato ed internazionale* (Roma 1999) 217-284. I express my deepfelt thanks to Ms Stacey Steele for her comments on drafts of this article. The transliteration of Japanese terms follows the Hepburn system. Japanese names of persons in the text are always in the original form "Surname and Name", *i.e.* different from the usual style of the Journal. The names of the Japanese cities Kyôto, Ôsaka, Tôkyô, are transliterated respecting the original phonetics, except for the bibliographic quotations employing the transliterations Kyoto, Osaka and Tokyo.

** Part Two will be published separately in the next issue of the Journal.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

It is my pleasure to introduce Dr Donatella Failla and her Article to the readers of this Journal. Dr Failla is a Japanese art historian and Director at Museo d'Arte Giapponese "Edoardo Chiossone", Genoa, Italy. When I met her at International House in Tokyo in June 2004, I was fascinated to hear about her research on national cultural properties (*bunkazai*) and her activities as curator of various exhibitions.

This Article is an historical introduction to contemporary legislation relating to the protection and regulation of art and culture in Japan. As Dr Failla points out, the Japanese legislative approach to art and culture reflects an evolving philosophy about the place of government and private actors in this sector. It is also inextricably connected to changing social and economic circumstances in Japan. This historical analysis is an important step to understanding the modern conception of *bunkazai* as legislated for by the Japanese Diet.

In Part I of this Article, Dr Failla details historical developments in Japan as they relate to art and culture during the Edo and Meiji periods. She also explains the contributions of important non-Japanese scholars and artists to Japan's awareness and knowledge of theories of art and culture and its related ideologies. In Part II of this Article, which will appear in the next issue of this Journal, Dr Failla will discuss historical developments relating to the legislative approach to *bunkazai* from 1950 to the present. She concludes that as modernization has accelerated in Japan, the theories and ideologies underpinning the relevant legislation have moved away from concepts of private ownership and sponsorship to State-involved protection, funding and regulation.

Dr Failla has researched *bunkazai* extensively in Japan and the Editors are delighted that her contribution further broadens the range of authors and content of the Journal. The genesis of this Article was a previous work by Dr Failla in Italian.*** She has updated her work for this Article and provided an interpretation in English of her historical framework and references. Rather than present a traditional, legalistic critique of the contemporary legislation, the Editors hope that Dr Failla's presentation of its historical context in English will suggest ideas for further research in the area of the law relating to *bunkazai*.

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*** Cf. *supra* note *.

I. INTRODUCTION

The history of 19th century Japanese art and art productions is set against the lively galaxy of events including, up to 1867, the “end of the Shogunate” (*bakumatsu*) and, thereafter, the restoration of imperial power, the modernization of the state apparatus and the Westernization of political institutions. This Article explores perceptions of art products in Japan and their evolution from feudalism to modernization, by showing how all those phenomena and events had an influence on: (1) the dispersion of the accumulated patrimonies of art and history, (2) the traditional and contemporary arts, (3) the course of their formal and technical development, and (4) their political and utilitarian conception as a source of prestige and enrichment for Japan. It is necessary to take into preliminary consideration that, as observed with great clarity by Carol Gluck, in Meiji Japan

«as elsewhere, the process of establishing a national ethos in a changed and changing social setting was a trial-and-error affair. Ideologies of the sort imperial Japan produced were neither created *ex nihilo* nor adopted ready-made. Without a text or a revelation to serve as a canonical source, views of state and society evolved fitfully, often inconsistently, into changing amalgams of past and present, near and foreign».¹

The events of this volcanic period of Japanese history reverberated on the traditional artistic productions and determined a new classification of Japanese art, influenced by the post-Renaissance European model. They also stimulated the birth of the first historical approach to the national cultural heritage. Finally, they exerted an important influence on the commerce in antiquities and works of art, as well as on the new phenomenon of the international collecting of “things Japanese”.

Direct contributions to the new era also came from “hired foreigners” (*oyatoi gaikokujin*), including from Western scientists, academics, technicians, professionals and artists who, invited by the imperial Japanese government, worked in Japan as special consultants on contract. Their work included facilitating the formation of the modern administrative, legal, political, military, industrial, economic, financial and cultural apparatus of the country, by training and imparting methods and fundamental notions to new generations of Japanese. Among the *yatoi* active in the cultural field, several contributed to the knowledge of the artistic and historical national wealth and its understanding, documentation and utilization. Certain *yatoi* introduced important technical refinements into contemporary Japanese artistic productions, others taught Western techniques of design and engraving, painting, sculpture and architecture (see

1 C. GLUCK, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period*, Princeton University Press (Princeton, New Jersey 1985) 4. Gluck's book on the state ideologies during the late Meiji is exemplary and unsurpassed on account of its clarity, interpretive acumen and richness of historical articulation.

below, at 4). All of these contributions reinforced the varied phenomenon of cultural and political internationalisation in Meiji Japan.

The first part of this article presents the evolution of the Japanese perception of the national cultural heritage and the cultural policy from the late Edo period to the Meiji period. This represents a most interesting case of the ideology of culture, the most part of which was “built” during the modernization of Meiji. And if it is undeniable that “art is a culturally constructed entity that may be endowed with values and meanings that change not only from one cultural context to another, but also at different times within the same cultural context”,² it is equally undeniable that this is particularly true in Japan. In fact, “from the time Japan began its deliberate pursuit of “civilization” in the mid-nineteenth century, ideology appeared as a conscious enterprise, a perpetual civic concern, an affair, indeed, of state”.³

II. THE POLITICAL PERCEPTION OF CULTURE AND THE ARTS FROM THE LATE 18TH TO THE MID-19TH CENTURY, FROM THE BAKUMATSU TO MEIJI RESTORATION

Governed by the *bakuhan* system from 1185 to 1868, Japan was divided into domains (*han*) administered by feudal lords (*daimyō*) dependent on the central authority of the Shōgun, the *generalissimo* or supreme military head. The latter held the political and administrative regency of the country, governing in the name of the Emperor and on his behalf. Down the centuries the Shogunate or “tent government” (*bakufu*) had established its seat in places other than Kyōto, the historic and cultural capital of Japan, where the Imperial Household continued to reside uninterruptedly until 1868 in conditions of marked isolation and political insignificance.

The capital of the Shōgun was established in Edo (today’s Tōkyō) by TOKUGAWA IEYASU (1543-1616). During two and a half centuries of undisputed dominion, his descendants carried the feudal system to its most complete and perfect form. The country, where a rigid separation of social classes was enforced, was kept in peace and in conditions of internal stability during the entire Edo period, sanctioning *sakoku*, i.e. isolation from the rest of the world, with apposite laws. The principal aim of *sakoku* was to avoid any ideological or religious interference whatsoever from the outside world and, especially, from Christian countries.

The only people to establish commercial relations with Japan after the anti-Christian persecutions and the expulsion of the Portuguese and Spanish (1639), were the Dutch.

2 C.M.E. GUTH, *Kokuhō: from dynastic to artistic treasure*, in: *Cahiers d’Extrême Asie*, no. 9 (1996-97) 314. This article offers a rare and precious analysis of the evolution of the notions of *hōmotsu* and *kokuhō* during the *bakumatsu* and the Meiji period.

3 GLUCK (*supra* note 1) 3.

They had permission to dock in Japan once a year, to exchange merchandise from Europe, China and Southern and Insular Asia. Despite the obstinate reluctance of the Shogunate to accept elements of “Western learning” (*yōgaku*), the latter filtered into Japan through the port of Deshima, a small artificial island in the Bay of Nagasaki, conceded to the Dutch in 1641. In the last quarter of the 18th century, the gradual accumulation of knowledge determined the formation of a movement in favour of “Dutch studies” (*rangaku*) and subsequently, from the beginning of the 19th century, the birth of schools, which managed to exert their influence on those who held power in the military regime only much later, in the final years of *bakumatsu*. The result of this was the opening in the capital Edo, at the expense and under the control of the regime, of the Institute of Western Learning (*Yōgakusho*) in 1855, which in the following year was renamed the Institute for the Investigation of Barbarian Books (*Bansho Shirabesho*). The principal activities of the Bansho Shirabesho were the study of Western sciences, the translation of diplomatic documents and the teaching of foreign languages: at first only Dutch and then, gradually, English and French (1861) and German and Russian (1862). Renamed “Research Institute on Western Books” (*Yōsho Shirabesho*) in 1862 and *Kaiseijo* in 1863, the institute was merged in 1877 with the University of Tōkyō (*Tōkyō Daigaku*).⁴ The Bansho Shirabesho contributed greatly to attenuating prejudice against the West, to spreading news of the scientific and technical methods practiced in Europe and to forming the generation which created the ideological and political movement towards the modernization of Japan. Eventually, however, the process of extrapolating and adopting ideas, information and knowledge from printed texts revealed its intrinsic limits, and more direct, effective and vital forms of cultural contribution were employed. The administrations of the feudal domains began to send their best individuals abroad, to study in European schools and universities and thereby obtain what was considered the necessary instruction.

Despite the increasing interest in the West, however, the feudal regime remained politically impenetrable. Towards the middle of the 19th century, this isolationist and strongly self-preserving system was undermined by various ideological movements and political events. First, and most importantly, the neo-Confucian notion that the legitimate, supreme responsibility for the government of the country ought to be confined to the Emperor alone regained popularity. Secondly, the conviction that Japan found itself in conditions of social, political and military backwardness compared to the rest of the world, spread progressively among men of culture. Finally, direct and extremely explicit pressure was exerted by the West to oblige Japan to open itself up to commercial and diplomatic relations with the rest of the world.

4 See KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN, 9 Volumes (Tokyo / New York 1983) Vol. 1, 141b-142a, *ad vocem* “Bansho Shirabesho”; Vol. 8, 69a-b and 241a-243a *ad voces* “Tōkyō University” and “Western Learning” respectively.

In 1853 the American Commodore MATTHEW CALBRIGHT PERRY (1794-1858) entered the Bay of Uraga with his warship, thus breaking Japanese seclusion from the outside and imposing *de facto* the extension of diplomatic and commercial relations. This breach in the wall of Japanese isolation was never to be closed. Further, even while it is true that the political attrition of the *bakufu* had already been ongoing for at least fifty years, it is also true that it was this event which resoundingly marked the “end of the Shogunate”, giving the starting signal for its collapse.

In 1858, five years after the Uraga episode, Ii NAOSUKE (1815-1860), a senior member of the Shogunate (*tairō*), agreed, without imperial ratification, to the *Ansei gokakoku jōyaku* (Ansei era Treaties with the Five Powers).⁵ These agreements guaranteed the United States of America, Great Britain, Holland, France and Russia not only conditions of absolute financial advantage in commerce and exchanges, but also extensive extraterritorial privileges and special residential rights. The capital Edo and the port cities of Nagasaki, Ōsaka, Hakodate, Niigata, Hyōgo (Kōbe) and Kanagawa, the latter replaced by Yokohama in 1859, were opened up to mercantile traffic from the West. These agreements, commonly called the “Unequal Treaties”, depressed the value of Japanese products, greatly hindered the commercial development of the country, impeded the formation and growth of a healthy, modern, autonomous economy and, in effect, constituted an affront to the sovereignty and self-determination of Japan. The internal struggles which raged around the Unequal Treaties in the years following their stipulation showed the Shogunate’s total incapacity to undertake and decide on the political actions indispensable to ensuring the country an effective presence in the new context of international relations.

For these reasons the Shōgun resigned in 1867. The following year power was entirely put back into the hands of the Emperor. The political change was ably and rapidly guided by the feudal domains of Chōshū and Satsuma, which were mutually bound by a secret alliance with the Imperial Court and favourable to the opening up of international political, diplomatic and commercial relations. The feudal regime, which for about seven hundred years had constituted the socio-political, administrative and economic structure of Japan, was instantaneously and definitively deprived of authority and the power of the Emperor was restored, inaugurating the new period called Meiji, literally “Enlightened Rule”. In 1868 the Emperor left Kyōto and transferred to Edo, renamed Tōkyō, the Eastern Capital.

5 Cf. KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) Vol. 1, 63a *ad vocem* “Ansei commercial treaties”.

The Abolition of Feudalism and Meiji Reforms: Consequences for Cultural Heritage

From the very beginning of the Meiji period, major political and diplomatic efforts were directed towards the “revision of the treaties” (*jōyaku kaisei*), it having become evident to those in power that it was necessary to pursue a policy of *bunmei kaika*, “civilization and enlightenment”, in order to function in the international context.

In three years (1873-76), the *Chitsuroku Shobun* (Measures on the Hereditary Stipends)⁶ decreed the progressive annulment of every condition of privilege, sweeping away the practical and theoretical meanings of feudal Japan and relegating the military to poverty and social rejection. In the briefest span of time, the entire connective system of society was shattered and deprived of legitimacy and from this followed the total loss of context for a whole living world of traditions. Gone with them also was the “system of things”, the concrete and symbolic representation of that world.

The initial political programme of the Meiji government in the years between 1868-73 involved the administrative reform of the country, the re-establishment of Shintō as the state religion and the opening-up of the nation to the international dimension of politics and culture. The administrative reform of the country, completed in 1871, was proclaimed by the Emperor with the *Haihan Chiken* decree (Abolition of the Feudal Domains and Establishment of the Prefectural System).⁷ This reform was the definitive affirmation of central authority and control over local administrations and was a direct consequence of the restoration of imperial power. The collecting of tax on agricultural income was centralized, removing from the local administrations any possibility of autonomy or subsistence and cancelling forever every residual prerogative of the feudal aristocracy. At this point, the *samurai* class went completely bankrupt.

The military aristocracy had not only governed Japan for seven centuries, but had also contributed to creating and maintaining the dominant ideologies of culture and art. Up to 1867 the *samurai* had been the patrons and promoters of art and, in the broadest sense, the custodians of the great riches of traditional culture, exerting a decisive role in the collective perception of culture and art, as well as in its consideration, evaluation and understanding. The Meiji Restoration and modernization, set in motion through the political elimination of the military, resulted in the definitive disappearance of the ancient, complex *samurai* cultural traditions.

As a consequence, a considerable part of the great wealth and treasures of art accumulated by the feudal domains was cast aside, lost or sold in haste to the highest bidder. A serious economic, social and ideological crisis hit the vast class of artists, decorators and craftsmen who, after faithfully serving their *samurai* patrons by producing an enor-

6 KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) Vol. 1, 297b-298a *ad vocem* “Chitsuroku shobun”.

7 KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) Vol. 6, 233b-235a *ad vocem* “Prefectural system, establishment of”.

mous number of works of art exclusively for them, suddenly found themselves deprived of customary outlets for their products. The artists were the guardians of precious professional secrets and of rare, professional craft skills and techniques. They were, moreover, the bearers of profound, artistic, historical, iconographic and aesthetic knowledge, symbiotically shared for hundreds of years with their patrons. For their part, the patrons had been trained to be good administrators and good soldiers, and were expected to cultivate the dual concept “civil and martial arts” (*bunbu*).

The knowledge, evaluation and collecting of art constituted capacities specifically cultivated for centuries by the ruling classes, who had gathered around themselves and patronized artists, connoisseurs and performers. For this reason too, within the circles of art connoisseurs, several erudite branches of antiquarian studies had developed and consolidated. There were experts, for example, in the field of *meibutsu* (precious and renowned articles imported from China, Korea, India, South-Eastern and Insular Asia) including bronze ware, lacquerware and porcelain for the tea ceremony, textiles and luxury fabrics, woven and lacquered rattan. Among the Buddhist clergy, too, numerous art experts emerged. They were custodians of the priceless and innumerable treasures of religious art which had gradually been accumulated by Buddhism, the state religion since 552 A.D.

The experience of many centuries in the arts of brushwork had been conserved by certain families and schools which had built up extraordinary knowledge and skills concerning the problems of authentication and recognition of calligraphy and painting, as well as the signatures and seals of artists. Within this group of scholars, connoisseurs and antiquarians it was common practice to produce lists, registers of assessment, catalogues, albums and anthologies of examples, the sum of experience and knowledge acquired and established down the centuries. As such, these records constituted traditional instruments of work jealously guarded, as well as privileged sources of rare learning. Various notebooks and lists of this type have come down to us and are of enormous interest and utility. It is essential, however, to understand that their range of use was limited to the restricted *élite* of schools and families of experts, scholars and collectors. These exceptional summaries of knowledge and experience were for a long time guarded by very exclusive circles and, therefore, until relatively recent times, their contents could not mix, evolve and mature in a broader vision of history and knowledge. While it is true that the division of the territory into fiefdoms had not impeded the development of a coherent, homogeneous culture, it is also true that feudal economic protectionism kept differences very much alive, emphasized local specialities and awarded value to characteristic arts and crafts. These products created under the strict control of the feudal lords (*daimyō*) and under the supervision of the officials nominated by them, constituted an important part of the protected economy of the fiefs. The perfecting of the feudal system and the political predominance of the *samurai* caste are also reflected by lacquerware and porcelain, whose extraordinary aesthetic and formal

accomplishments attest to the firm control that the military aristocracy exerted over classic, traditional art products and their quality.

At the other end of the social spectrum, during the Tokugawa period, the *chônin*, the city middle class, established the new Edo style of life known as *ukiyo*, “the floating world”. *Ukiyo* was a highly complex urban culture, springing out of and revolving around the Kabuki theatres and the official (and unofficial) pleasure and amusement quarters. The Edo *chônin* culture not only featured new forms of literature, poetry and theatre, but also developed a completely new imagery. Innovative printing techniques made possible the mass circulation of illustrated books and coloured prints representing the variegated urban scenery and its protagonists. This artistic movement brought together a full expression of the activities and pastimes, the aims and goals, the interests, delights, and tragedies of the people living in Edo, Kyôto and Ôsaka. Edo popular culture was self-consciously anti-classic, and clearly carried the typical traits of a “culture of opposition”.

During the Edo period ideas and theories had been developed as to antiquity and the ancient cultural and religious identity of Japan. Various scholars of neo-Confucian education employed in the administrations of the fiefdoms had noted in local chronicles fortuitous finds from chance excavations and, with the aim of classifying the substantial collections of ancient stone artifacts that had gradually become richer and richer, they compiled detailed lists and descriptive records. The theories adopted in the reading and understanding of the historical contexts and finds were essentially of two types: while the neo-Confucians inclined towards rationalist conceptions, other scholars showed a marked preference for traditional, semi-mythological interpretations, which took their cue from the consultation of the ancient Japanese chronicles of the 8th century, like the *Nihon Shoki* (Chronicle of Japan). It was in these surroundings that these important works became cloaked in the exceptional dignity of “treasures” (*hômotsu*) and rose to the rank of outstanding cultural symbols. In these treasures of ancient art tied to the territory, to the land and to the history of the fiefdoms, the mythological sense of the past was concentrated and combined with basic elements of ethnic identity, which were welded with political and ideological expectations. All these clues foreshadowed and, indeed, provided the ideological mould for the Japanese notion of “national treasure” (*kokuhô*). This term, which is first mentioned in a written order sent to a feudal lord in 1872, with specific reference to precious objects coming from the land of the fief, and therefore belonging to the domain,⁸ was subsequently employed in the documents and public ordinances of the Meiji period, and is still today a crucial element of Japan’s legislation on cultural property of national importance.

The first signs of the maturing of a comprehensive vision for Japan’s artistic and historical heritage were shown thanks to the influence of the “national studies” move-

8 Cf. GUTH (*supra* note 2) 315.

ment (*kokugaku*), and in particular through its antiquarian branch, which in the late 18th century and throughout the 19th, promoted research, the production of documentation and the copying of ancient works conserved in temples, shrines and private collections.⁹ The first initiative to reveal an overall national view of the artistic and historical heritage was indebted to the *kokugaku* influence and produced a survey of antiquities over the whole of Japan's territories carried out over two years in 1795-96, by various artists under the guidance of the painter TANI BUNCHÔ (1763-1840).¹⁰ It was patronised by the great authorities of the Shogunate, in particular, MATSUDAIRA SADANOBU (1758-1829), senior councillor (*rôjû*) of the Shôgun.¹¹ At the end of the survey and as a record of it, under the title *Shûko jisshu* (Antiquities collected under ten categories), Matsudaira compiled a block-printed compendium in four volumes organized by theme, which clearly reflects a vision of the works as "sources of information and points of historical reference".¹² The first volume contains the chronologically-ordered review of paintings and sculptures depicting emperors, members of court and other important historical personages. The mirrors, arms, armour and other artistic artifacts selected are presented not just as "precious relics rich in information about the past", but also so as to enable them to be "studied and compared with other examples of the same genre". Matsudaira's intention was to "provide information useful to the artists and scholars of his generation".¹³ So long-lasting was the ideological charge of the *Shûko jisshu* that it was reprinted in facsimile edition in 1908, towards the end of the Meiji period.¹⁴

9 Cf. GUTH (*supra* note 2) 319.

10 Cf. KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) Vol. 7, 341a *ad vocem* "Tani Bunchô".

11 Cf. KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) Vol. 5 131b-132a *ad vocem* "Matsudaira Sadanobu".

12 Cf. GUTH (*supra* note 2) 319.

13 *Ibidem*.

14 I have consulted the Meiji reprint of *Shûko jisshu* in Tôkyô, at the Library of the National Institute of Japanese Literature (*Kokuritsu Kokubungaku Kenkyû Shiryôkan*).

III. THE BIRTH AND EVOLUTION OF THE NEW IDEOLOGY OF CULTURE IN MEIJI STRATEGIES OF POLITICAL PRAGMATISM

Until the end of the Shogunate, the military aristocracy had functioned as the promoter and patron of the arts and, in a wider sense, also custodian of the great heritages. Because of this, it had exerted a role of the foremost significance in the collective perception, in the consideration, evaluation and comprehension of culture and the arts.

At the same time as they excluded the feudal aristocracy from power, the Meiji reformers took care to establish and maintain a new state religion and a new ideology of culture, communicating the contents of these by means of a

«government language of social education» (*kyōka*): Japanese leaders were, in fact, certain «that institutions alone were insufficient to secure the nation. It was not enough that the policy be centralized, the economy developed, social classes rearranged, international recognition striven for – the people must also be “influenced”, their minds and hearts made one (*shōkakokoro o itsu ni shi*)».¹⁵

To open the way for this new orientation of Japanese society, as well as to reinforce the restored institution of the Empire, an unbiased political and ideological policy was rapidly brought into being. It was organized on two fronts: (1) the *haibutsu kishaku* movement was fostered to “destroy Buddha and expel Sākyamuni”,¹⁶ in a grim popular storm of iconoclasm, xenophobic abolition and religious persecution against Buddhism; and (2) the great powers of the Restoration proposed and put into practice the separation of Buddhism and Shintō (*shinbutsu bunri*).¹⁷ The crucial, simultaneous occurrence of the reform of territorial administration, the reinforcement of pro-imperial ideology and the revival of Shintō during the years 1868-71, marked the highpoint of the virulence of anti-Buddhist persecution. Thus was dismantled the peaceful, syncretistic balance of Ryōbu Shintō, which the two religions had developed from ancient times establishing equivalences, relationships of reciprocal identification and substantial correspondences between their respective divinities. Shintō was thus elevated to the position of the one, indigenous, authentic religion of state.

The years 1868-71, in concomitance with the administrative reform of territory referred to above, the strengthening of the pro-imperial ideology and the revival of Shintō, coincided with the climax of the anti-Buddhist persecution. This had a huge impact on the great historical collections of religious art held in Buddhist temple complexes, sanctuaries and monasteries in every part of Japan. A terrible destruction of great religious

15 GLUCK (*supra* note 1) 3.

16 On *haibutsu kishaku*, see the excellent essay by M. COLLCUTT, Buddhism: the Threat of Eradication, in: M. JANSEN / G. ROZMAN (Eds.), Japan in Transition: from Tokugawa to Meiji (Princeton University Press, Princeton 1988) 143-167.

17 On *shinbutsu bunri*, see the excellent essay by A. GRAPARD, Japan's Ignored Cultural Revolution: the Separation of Shintō and Buddhist Divinities in Meiji (*shinbutsu bunri*) and a Case Study: Tōnomine, in: History of Religions 1984, no. 23/3, 240-65.

works of architecture, painting and ancient, medieval and modern statuary took place. According to Guth,

«while the severity of the forces unleashed in this anti-Buddhist campaign varied from region to region and even from temples of one sect to another, there is no question but that they resulted in a fundamental reconfiguration of the Japanese religious and artistic landscape».¹⁸

To these suppressions and destructions was added requisition of the land from which Buddhist temples drew their means of sustenance and survival. Deprived of the agricultural resources which had rendered possible the maintenance and growth of an enormous wealth of historical and religious art, temples and monasteries were reduced to poverty. Many Buddhist paintings, documents, liturgical implements and vestments were lost forever, while many others were sold and make up part of the great public and private collections of today, both in Japan and elsewhere.

It is interesting to briefly describe here the most emblematic case. Japan's most ancient Buddhist temple compound, the Hôryûji, which had been founded and built in 601-607 A.D. on prince SHÔTOKU's (574-622 A.D.) special command at Ikaruga, Nara, became so impoverished that in 1876 it found itself obliged to give up the most precious part of its art treasures, conferring them to the Imperial Household. The invaluable collection of temple treasures given away included a celebrated group of forty-eight early Buddhist sculptures, known as the *Shijûhattai butsu*. In compensation for the gift, the Hôryûji received 10,000 Yen, and this amount was intended to be employed by the monks for the restoration of the temple buildings. In 1882, the venerable Buddhist antiquities of Hôryûji became part of the patrimony of the Ueno Imperial Museum, today's Tôkyô National Museum. Designated "national treasure" as a whole, they are kept as long-term loans and exhibited since 1964 in a museum building, the Hôryûji Hômonsukan, which has been newly re-designed and re-constructed (1999) in the Tôkyô National Museum grounds.¹⁹

It was only many years later that the *Koshaji Hozon Hô* (Law for the Protection of Ancient Temples and Shrines) of 1897, stopped the serious impoverishment of Buddhist works of art. In the meantime, how did the new establishment deal with the cultural heritage? What were the points of view that the highest political powers publicised as the comprehensive perception of art and culture?

18 Another quotation from GUTH (*supra* note 2) 315.

19 Cf. TÔKYÔ NATIONAL MUSEUM, *Umarekawatsuta Hôryûji Hômonsukan*. Contemporary Vision – Ancient Art: the New Gallery of Horyuji Treasures (Tôkyô 1999).

1. *The First Period of Internationalization of Japan: the Contribution of the Iwakura Diplomatic Mission of 1871-73 to the Views of Art and Artistic Culture*

It is important to highlight the influential views and important consequences as regard the political perception and ideological use of the national cultural patrimonies which, since the beginning of the Meiji period, were due to the Iwakura Diplomatic Mission (*Iwakura Kengai Shisetsu*).²⁰ Organized by the state, the Iwakura Mission had the principal aim of negotiating the revision of the Unequal Treaties. Its members travelled to fifteen European countries and the United States of America in 1871-73.

The head of the mission was the Minister of the Right (*Udaijin*) IWAKURA TOMOMI (1825-1883), one of the fathers of the Restoration. KUME KUNITAKE, private secretary to Iwakura, compiled a diary, which was published in 1878 under the patronage of the Grand Council of State (*Dajōkan*) under the title *Tokumei Zenken Taishi: Beiō Kairan Jikki* (Report on the Journey of the Special Mission in America and Europe). This diary is an important source and influenced the internal and foreign politics of the subsequent thirty years. The pages dedicated to the places stopped at in Italy, with the descriptions of the historic cities, the monuments, the museums and art collections, strike the reader with their range and accuracy. For example, after the visit to the Uffizi, Iwakura noted:

«Italy is the place where art was born and all the forms of ancient painting and sculpture in existence are, without exception, a sublime creation of this country. Whether it is a question of a bust or of the fragment of a statue executed two thousand years ago, everything is considered to be precious. Moreover, while in the museums or art galleries in other countries most of the statues and famous paintings are nothing other than copies, on the contrary, here the collections contain original works».²¹

It is indispensable to add that it was certainly by virtue of this judgment that some years later the Japanese government offered teaching contracts to Italians of different specializations: the painter ANTONIO FONTANESI, the sculptor VINCENZO RAGUSA and the architect GIOVANNI VINCENZO CAPPELLETTI, called upon in 1876 to hold, respectively, the courses in Western Painting, Sculpture and Architecture at the Technical School of Fine Arts (*Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō*).

The Iwakura Mission was Japan's first diplomatic instrument of political and cultural internationalization and made important contributions in terms of art and artistic culture. It drew attention to understanding Western models for the historical interpretation of ancient and contemporary art, contributing to orienting the political perception

20 KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) Vol. 3, 358b-360a *ad vocem* "Iwakura mission", provides a complete and very explicative synthesis.

21 I quote S. IWAKURA, *La missione Iwakura e l'arte italiana*, in: ISTITUTO GIAPPONESE DI CULTURA (ed.), *Il Giappone scopre l'Occidente: una Missione Diplomatica 1871-73*, (Carte Segrete, Roma 1994) 81. The passage has been translated from Italian into English by the present writer.

of Japan's cultural heritage and the strategic views concerning its use. What is more, the ways and means of the country's communications with and from the outside became, from that moment onwards, much more effective. In the artistic field, the traditional Japanese lexicon lacked terms equivalent to "sculpture" and "fine arts". Thus, at the time of the Iwakura Mission the new words *chōkoku* and *bijutsu*²² were coined and immediately adopted in establishment surroundings and in the state bureaucracy of culture. It has been suggested, for example, that the term *bijutsu* was used for the first time in 1873, during the Vienna International Exposition.²³ It is important to underline that the creation and use of these terms signal:

«the wholesale adoption in Japan of the post-Renaissance classificatory scheme in which the fine arts of painting and sculpture were privileged over the decorative arts. However, the influence of this new mode of thinking about art was initially quite limited, as was its impact in classifying traditional Japanese art».²⁴

2. *Aims and Results of the Surveys of Japan's Cultural Heritage Guided and Sponsored by the State in the 1870s and 1880s*

The years from 1868 to 1890 may be divided into three phases: the beginning, consolidation and transition from early modernization to the mature Meiji period. This period was marked by two political and legislative events of the greatest importance: the promulgation of the Constitution of the Empire of Japan (*Dai Nihon Teikoku Kenpō*, 1889) – more commonly known as the Meiji Constitution (*Meiji Kenpō*) – and the Imperial Rescript on Education (*Kyōiku ni Kansuru Chokugo*, 1890), which enormously influenced Japan's future destinies. The new administration's approach to art productions and national cultural property were very much influenced by: (1) the enormity of the effort of change, propagated by the slogan "civilization and enlightenment", which absorbed and directed energies towards the primary need for modernization, and (2) the fact that the highest bureaucrats did not share unanimous opinions on the politics of priority.

From 1871 onwards, however, the government showed itself in agreement, if for different reasons, on the fact that the protection of "relics of great age" (*kohin*) was an

22 From IWAKURA (*supra* note 21) 80, I quote and translate the following passage: «... it is necessary to keep in mind that the term *chōkoku* was coined just at that time, by translating the Western term "sculpture". Before then there was not a Japanese general conception of sculpture and the works made by artists specialising exclusively either in buddhist or shinto images were simply called "Buddha's image" or *ranma*. The latter is a term indicating a sort of frieze, typical of Japanese tradition, finely carved with decorations».

23 H. YOKOMIZO, *Wien bankoku hakurankai shuhin mokuroku sōkō - bijutsu kōgei hen (1)* [A list and bibliography of the products exhibited in Vienna International Exposition. 1. Arts and Crafts], in: *Bijutsu Kenkyū* (July 1993).

24 Cf. GUTH (*supra* note 2) 314.

objective of national interest. Therefore, ordinances were issued containing both governmental directives on the safeguarding of antiquities, such as the Ordinance for the Protection of Antiquities and Old Relics (*Kohin kyûbutsu hozon fukoku*),²⁵ and a list of 31 types of protected objects, among which figured ancient mirrors and swords, Buddhist images, ritual furnishings and liturgical implements. Mirrors and swords, which together with the comma-shaped bead or “curved jewel” (*magatama*) are symbols of the divine, solar origins of the Imperial Household, appear first on the list. According to Guth, this clearly denotes the cultural and ideological privilege guaranteed to Shintô.²⁶ Ordinances followed which established the obligation to compile official inventories of the cultural possessions owned by noble families, temples and sanctuaries. Contemporaneously, the first government plan appeared for constituting a “museum of antiquities” (*shûkokan*). The museum, initially organized with the characteristics typical of a gallery covering many disciplines, exhibited objects of artistic and historical importance, alongside scientific and Natural History finds. It was provisionally based, between 1871 and 1873, in the Yushima Seidô, a building in the Yushima Taisha Confucian temple complex in the Kanda area in Tôkyô.²⁷ By 1873, the museum had already been filled up to the point that had to be transferred in the Kôjimachi area, to the same residence that used to belong to the Shimazu feudal family.

In 1872 a team of connoisseurs, artists and photographers dependent on the Museum Department (*Hakubutsu Kyoku*), a division instituted within the Ministry of Education (*Monbushô*), conducted a survey of antiquities, from province to province, over a period of six months. The Director of the Museum Department was at the time MACHIDA HISANARI (1838-97).²⁸ Born in Satsuma, Machida had been sent to study in London in 1866 and had assimilated the British point of view with regard to the duties and functions of a museum as a public centre of education and training on national history and culture. To understand the aims of this first, methodical survey of Japan’s cultural heritage, conducted and financed by the state, it is useful to recognize its political meaning, both from an ideological and a practical perspective. In the course of the survey, numerous works belonging to temples and sanctuaries were inventoried and later designated “national treasures”. The main purpose of the undertaking, however, was not simply to safeguard the national artistic heritage; rather, it was to respond to the need to set up a national register of the possessions of religious institutions in order to enforce the laws on confiscation and secularization of the previous year (see above, at 3). Again, this was

25 The text of the ordinance is entirely reproduced in: *Tôkyô Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan Hyakunenshi* [The Hundredth Anniversary of the Tôkyô National Museum] (Tôkyô 1973) Vol. 2, 605-6.

26 Cf. GUTH (*supra* note 2) 315.

27 Cf. KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) Vol. 5, 275b-280b, in part. 276a, *ad vocem* “Museums”.

28 Cf. Machida Hisanari’s biography in *Tôkyô Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan Hyakunenshi* (*supra* note 25) Vol. I, 24-37.

directed towards establishing firm state control and supervision over religious institutions.

No less important at that time was the will to know the exact location of objects and artefacts to be shown at the 1873 Vienna International Exposition and, finally, the need to pick out works of art to be used as models for the production of lacquerware, ceramics, textiles, bronze ware and other items in precious metal destined for export. The cultural properties of temples and shrines were thus inventoried because they contained works to be used as examples for luxury products destined for the foreign market, which would represent overseas the national industrial arts of Imperial Japan.

The intent was clear. Japan wanted to communicate an image of itself as a state capable of creating and imposing art products of high aesthetic quality and elevated financial value on the international market, thus affirming its significant presence in the modern, economic community. The foreign market in contemporary art was an extremely high priority.²⁹ For instance, in a letter to Ernest F. Fenollosa dated 15 September 1886, Prime Minister ITÔ HIROBUMI (1841-1909) while openly declaring the necessary subordination of art to industry, postpones the foundation of an art museum to a later moment, waiting for a better condition of the state economy.³⁰

On the rapidly transforming cultural horizon of the first decade of the Meiji era, therefore, it was clear that the enormous artistic skills and craft potential of the country, tempered and refined during the feudal age, had been suddenly deprived of clients and markets and were to be gathered, reorganized, encouraged, developed and reconverted, then oriented towards the world market of art-collecting. It was necessary to pursue the economic and politico-cultural aim of selling costly works of elevated formal quality abroad and aim to propagate by their means a high-profile image of Japanese artistic civilization. These efforts fitted in, in theory and practice, with the government policy, proclaimed in the state propaganda slogan “rich country, strong army” (*fukoku kyôhei*) and supported the pragmatic corollary “encourage industry, promote production” (*shokusan kôgyô*). Statesmen, exponents of the Museum Department and prominent cultural bureaucrats held that the works of art to be chosen as authentic, exemplary models, were precisely those which could procure Japan’s commercial advantage. In other words, those items which artists and artisans, organized in modern companies (*kaisha*), could copy, reproduce and utilize as sources of inspiration to create luxury articles to be placed on sale on foreign markets.

In the port towns of Yokohama and Kôbe, from the later years of the Shogunate, firms existed that dealt in *hamamono*, export pieces specifically made for foreigners.³¹

29 Cf. GUTH (*supra* note 2) 316-317.

30 E.P. CONANT, Principles and Pragmatism: the Yatoi in the Field of Art, in: E. BEAUCHAMP / A. IRIYE. (eds.), Foreign Employees in Nineteenth Century Japan (Westview Press, Boulder-San Francisco-London 1990) 156-57.

31 The term *hamamono*, meaning «goods for export from the port of Yokohama» appears in:

These were curious, strange, surprising souvenirs, which were sometimes costly *pastiche*s in bizarre taste or, at other times, cheap articles of rough, crude manufacture. Metal ware and enamels certainly bear witness to the interesting phenomenon of transition from one epoch to another. The complete re-conversion of these productions was a response, in fact, both to the demands of Japanese customers, who had altered politically and culturally, and to the taste and requirements of the international market.

From the mid-1870s the increasing stream of production which fed both the internal and external market required new forms of organization. Artists and craftsmen worked for workshops and companies (*kaisha*), sometimes set up in tandem with the state, which saw to relations with clients and to the advertising and export of products. The most famous of these companies, the *Kiritsu Kôshô Kaisha* or Industry and Commerce Company, was created in 1874 for the purpose of attending to sales in the Japanese pavilion at the exhibition in 1873 in Vienna. Owned equally by private citizens and the government, it carried on business uninterrupted until 1891. The two branches opened by the company abroad in New York (1877) and Paris (1878), sold refined pieces of lacquerware and metal, signed by the greatest artists of the time, including SHIBATA ZESHIN (1807-1891), KANÔ NATSUO (1828-1898) and SUZUKI CHÔKICHI (1848-1919). The range of firms involved in the sector was extremely varied, however, both because each was concerned with different technical and artistic specialities and because there were great variations in quality.

This utilitarian conception of the national patrimony of art and history without doubt was influenced by contemporary Western viewpoints and, in particular, by those of the English and French.³² During the 1870s the upper echelons of the state bureaucracy were absolutely convinced that Japan could bear economic and cultural comparison with the West thanks to the export of its arts and crafts. Since these products had aroused interest and growing success at the international expositions of the 1860s and 1870s – London (1862), San Francisco (1871), Vienna (1873), Philadelphia (1876), Paris (1878) – the state continued to guarantee Japan's participation at all following exhibitions, until the end of the Meiji period – Amsterdam (1883), New Orleans and Nuremberg (1885), Barcelona (1887), Chicago (1893), Venice (1897), Paris (1900), St. Louis (1904), London (1910). In Japan, periodic Domestic Industrial Expositions (*Naikoku Kangyô Hakurankai*) were instituted and placed under the protection, organization and control of the Ministry of Finance (*Ôkurashô*) and that of Home Affairs (*Naimushô*), the first three being held in Tôkyô (1877, 1881, 1890), the fourth in Kyôto (1895) and the fifth and last in Ôsaka (1903).³³

The Centenary Culture Council Series, *Japanese Arts and Crafts in the Meiji Era*, N. UYENO (ed.) / R. LANE (English adaptation) (Tokyo 1958) 109.

32 Cf. GUTH (*supra* note 2) 316-17.

33 KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) Vol. 5, 341b *ad vocem* "Naikoku Kangyô Hakurankai". A most interesting and well documented essay on the theme of

The most important bodies of state publicly showed their support, both by bestowing recognition, prizes and conspicuous donations of money on the artists, and by making farsighted, substantial acquisitions of works, destined to form in the future a most valuable part of the national collections of modern art.

Riding on the wave of successes abroad, several bureaucrats and high state functionaries actively employed in the organization of national and international exhibitions – among whom figure KUKI RYŪICHI (1852-1931) and SANŌ TSUNETAMI (1822-1902) – founded the Dragon Pond Society (*Ryūchikai*) in 1879.³⁴ Its statutory aims were the defence and protection of old art, as well as the transmission, utilization and promotion of Japanese art traditions. Significantly, among its members was MATSUO GISUKE (1837-1902), the president of *Kiritsu Kōshō Kaisha*.

In 1881 *Ryūchikai* assumed the responsibility for continuing the Exhibition of Old Art (*Kanko bijutsukai*), which was started in 1880 by the Ministry of Home Affairs as a complement of the Domestic Industrial Exposition first organised in 1877 to promote industry. In 1883 and 1884, in cooperation with the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs (its French counterpart), *Ryūchikai* organized the Japanese Art Exhibition in Paris (*Pari Nihon bijutsu jūrankai*), which was expected to serve both as a means for enhancing Japan's international status and as a market research tool to probe Western tastes. By so doing, *Ryūchikai* became an internationally known supporter of the Japanese national policy of “increase production, promote industry” (*shokusan kōgyō*).

The *shokusan kōgyō* policy had an important corollary in the notion of “appreciating the old, benefiting the new” (*kōko rikon*). Accordingly, the contemporary works of art, at that time called “new products” (*shin-seihin*), were included for the first time in the sixth Exhibition of Old Art of 1885. Placing the new works alongside the old and antique ones was aimed not only at highlighting the artistic continuity between past and present, but especially responded to the utilitarian conception of art nurtured by the establishment. According to this conception, fine works of old art should be regarded as outstanding examples and models, capable of inspiring and promoting the production of high-quality, expensive art and crafts to be sold at home and abroad. *Ryūchikai* members engaged themselves in the debate over the definition of “art objects” (*bijutsu*). This is evidenced by the publication *Kōgei sōdan*. Following the rise, strengthening and political solidification of the *tennōsei ideorogii* in the early 1880s, and thanks to its strong base in the Ministries of Finance, Home Affairs and the Imperial Household,

exhibitions in Japan during the Edo and Meiji periods is by P. KORNICKI, Public Displays and Changing Values: Early Meiji Exhibitions and Their Precursors, in: *Monumenta Nipponica* Vol. 49/2 1994, 167-196.

34 D. SATŌ, Ryūchi-kai, in: E.P. CONANT / S.D. OWYOUNG / J.T. RIMER (eds.), *Nihonga Transcending the Past: Japanese-Style Painting, 1868-1968* (The Saint Louis Art Museum / The Japan Foundation 1995) 78-79. This is the source of the news and data on *Ryūchikai* referred to in this Article.

Ryūchikai tenaciously pursued and realised the aim of bringing into the imperial sphere of influence both the ideology of culture and the interests of state relevant to artistic productions. *Ryūchikai* gave a most important contribution to founding and consolidating, from the early years of Meiji period, the two-faceted cultural policy conjugating the protection of old art and the promotion of contemporary arts and crafts. This turned out to be a long-lasting policy and is still alive in today's Japan. The *Ryūchikai* was refounded in 1886 under the name Japan Art Association (*Nihon Bijutsu Kōkai*).³⁵

a) *Kokka Yohō, "The Lasting Fragrance of the National Glory": the Contribution of the Genoese Engraver Edoardo Chiossone to the Illustration and Documentation of the Treasures of Ancient Art*

It was only towards the end of the 1870s that the state campaigns to inventory the national artistic wealth showed a clear change of direction. From that time, in fact, political interests began to assume the tendency which would be further revealed in the 1880s towards the ideology of the imperial system (*tennōsei ideorogii*), emphasizing the notions of "nation-state" (*kokka*) and "nation-body" (*kokutai*). Moreover, the Hakubutsu Kyoku was not, as many still seem to believe, the only state office to promote and guide surveys of the cultural heritage. Even today there is little knowledge and information about a photographic and documentary survey conducted in 1879 by the Printing Bureau of the Ministry of Finance (*Ōkurashō Insatsu Kyoku*) under the control and organisation of TOKUNŌ RYŌSUKE (1825-1882), the Director General of the Printing Bureau.

Born in Kagoshima in the Satsuma fief, Tokunō was deeply dedicated to the national interest, and also highly esteemed and respected for his wide knowledge of history and literature. Appointed to the post at the printing Bureau in 1874, Tokunō was among the most prominent bureaucrats of Meiji reform, and one of the protagonists of Japan's industrial, technical and cultural modernisation.³⁶ The survey went through the Kantō, Chūbu and Kinki regions, important areas of history and art, and its results were put together, ordered and published in the monumental collection entitled, "The Lasting Fragrance of National Glory" (*Kokka Yohō*), which appeared between 1880 and 1883, edited and printed by the Printing Bureau. Of the eight illustrated volumes, five albums contain 120 collotypes showing historical sites, monumental temple complexes, temples, sanctuaries, imperial mausolea and famous landscape views. Another three volumes, entitled "Treasures of the Inner Temple of Ise" (*Ise Naikū Shinpōbu*) and "Imperial Properties of the Shōsōin" (*Shōsōin Gyōbutsu*), include large double-page

35 D. SATŌ, The Japan Art Association, in: CONANT / OWYOUNG / RIMER (eds.) (*supra* note 32) 80-81.

36 See Tokunō Ryōsuke's biography in: *Insatsu Kyoku Hyakunen shi* [One hundred years of history of the Printing Bureau], Ōkurashō Insatsu Kyoku (Tōkyō 1971).

illustrations, printed as chromolithographs and photolithographs.³⁷ Tokunô also kept a travel diary, posthumously published under the title *Junkai Nikki*,³⁸ which contained descriptions of the itineraries followed, the terrain crossed, its features in terms of agriculture, forest, water and monuments, the resources it contained (water courses, mines, quarries, mineral and other deposits and both traditional and modern productive and manufacturing activity), the posting stations, the prefectural offices and, naturally, the historical and artistic remains (monuments, temples, shrines and their assets and patrimonies), as well as the legends associated with places and the memories handed down from antiquity on the meaning of place names and the origins of settlements and popular customs.

Eleven functionaries and consultants of various specializations, belonging to the Printing Bureau of the Ministry of Finance, participated in the mission, which lasted about five months from May 1st to September 19th, 1879. Among the participants were photographers, art experts and the Genoese artist Edoardo Chiossone (see below, § 4.1) who, in his capacity as head of the engraving division of the Printing Bureau and Professor of engraving and design, was charged with executing sketches and drawings. By the end of the journey, Chiossone had produced about 200 drawings, while the photographs numbered more than 500. It was precisely in this circumstance that a new formal, conceptual model of aesthetics was established for the representation of the “national treasures”, which attributed the reason for their historical existence and their preservation down the centuries to an uninterrupted lineage of emperors. In consideration of the aims of the survey, a reading of Tokunô’s preface to *Junkai Nikki* proves illuminating:

«Art comes from Nature. Looking up at towering mountains elevates our ideas to the height. And watching rivers which flow impetuously encourages us to study with greater intensity. This is the truth of Nature. The people of antiquity, while producing utensils, must have tried to design them according to reality, realising in them their ideals. Now, while observing their works, their efforts are admonitory and compel us to feel esteem for them. We ought to know how many of their thoughts they devoted to art. The ancient paintings, examples of calligraphy and other works are places which harbour the spirit of the ancients. And when we see them we immediately feel ourselves in intimate conversation with them, just as if we were learning from them. And at the same time we would like to discover the technical secrets of their works. This should make up for the deficiency in books of history. Well, there are very many objects which have been preserved from antiquity until today thanks to an unbroken line of emperors. These ancient objects are worthy of respect.

37 Cf. D. FAILLA, Edoardo Chiossone, un Collezionista Erudito nel Giappone Meiji (Genova 1996) 20-22, figs. 2, 10, 11, cat. I/17a-b.

38 R. TOKUNÔ, *Junkai Nikki* [Travel diary] (Ôkurashô Insatsu Kyoku, Tôkyô [1889] Meiji 22).

This time I have received the order for performing a travel to survey the country and examine paintings, calligraphies and other objects preserved in repositories, shrines, temples and private homes. I have also examined the relics kept as treasures by philosophers of old and by holy men, and the works done by skilled craftsmen and great masters. I have appreciated the beauty of mountain-and-water landscapes and the magnificence of temples and shrines. Whenever I found things worth being used as models for industrial products, I have taken photographs of them, or copied them, in order to prepare lithographs or photolithographs to be kept for the future. The places been surveyed are the eleven prefectures of Yamanashi, Shizuoka, Aichi, Mie, Sakai, Wakayama, Kyôto, Shiga, Gifu, Gunma and Tochigi. During the travel I have written on the things seen and heard, in order to publish them in a book. I have asked the Ministry of the Imperial Household whether I might examine the Shôsôin treasures, and I have received permission, as a special favour from the Minister of the Imperial Household, through the Minister of Finance. I express here my deep gratitude.

Along with me have travelled the below mentioned persons: Edoardo Chiossone, professor of engraving techniques hired from Italy; Shichijo Heiroku, 5th rank official of general affairs; Yoshida Kensuke, a hired official; Machida Kenkichi, a factory inspector; Saegusa Moritomi, an engineer of photography; Itô Nobuo, an ore analyst; Naruse Joichi, an interpreter; Tokunô Michiyasu, a trainee of ore analysis; Tokunô Hikoji and Takahashi Tanzô, trainees of photography; Higuchi Mitsuyoshi and Ukai Sanji, art connoisseurs. In December, the 12th year of Meiji, Tokunô Ryôsuke». ³⁹

This campaign distinguished itself from its predecessors not only by the systematic surveys of the imperial mausoleums and the Shintô shrines, but also, as Tokunô recounts, by an exceptional event: the Minister of the Imperial Household accorded special permission for the opening, visiting and detailed examining of, and for the drawing up of a descriptive list and the copying of, the “imperial properties” (*gyôbutsu*) in the Tôdaiji Buddhist temple in Nara, which had lain in the Shôsôin repository since 756, and of the treasures (*shinpô*) in the Shintô sanctuary of Ise, which were tied to the divine origin of the imperial lineage itself. The plates printed in chromolithography and photolithography are of breathtaking, perfect beauty and exceptional quality. We owe them to Edoardo Chiossone and the team of industrial engravers and printers trained by him at the Imperial Printing Bureau. The news concerning the official ceremony of presentation of the volumes to emperor Mutsuhito appeared in every newspaper. The first printing of *Kokka Yohô* consisted of twenty exemplars, which were all offered to the highest representatives in the state establishment. This demonstrates the meaning of the ideological and political orientation implied in the volumes.

By now, the grim, confused period of anti-Buddhist iconoclasm and xenophobia had finally closed. The state thus needed and wanted to show itself capable of researching

39 This translation was prepared in 1995 by myself and Professor Sugiura Masomiko of the Institute of Japanese Language, The Franciscan Chapel Centre, Tôkyô.

its own uninterrupted continuity and spiritual grounding in antiquity, revealing, by means of the sacred Shintō and Buddhist masterpieces, both the duality and the individuality of the two different religious traditions. No less important was its need to show the original, remote, cultural and artistic link that the Imperial Household had with each of them. A new ideological horizon opened up with the publication of *Kokka Yohō*, in which the important art-historical and religious heritage was made an integral part of the “imperial panorama” of national culture. The work of Chiossone in the field of documentation and illustration of the cultural and historical patrimonies, clearly exemplified the political and ideological mainstream of that precise moment, which corresponded to the initial elaboration of the *tennōsei ideorogii*. It also suggested the Meiji conceptions of Japan as a “state-nation” (*kokka*) and a “body-nation” (*kokutai*) embodied in the sacred beauty of ancient objects.⁴⁰ It was in the field of artistic culture, in fact, that the Meiji concept of *kokutai* precociously appears and inaugurates a new state cult. Thanks to Chiossone’s illustrations, a new aesthetic, conceptual and formal model was established for the representation of the art treasures. The great masterpieces from the past are actually portrayed as autonomous, animated, living entities, and their images show the subtle signs of *kokutai*’s immanent transcendence.⁴¹

b) *The Extension of the Cultural Policy from the early 1880s to the Promulgation of the Law for the Protection of Ancient Temples and Shrines in 1897*

After the publication of *Kokka Yohō*, the Museum Department continued to carry out surveys, especially in the areas of Kyōto and Nara, and compiled inventories of temples and sanctuaries, thanks to which the existence of eminent works was revealed. The most notable of these surveys was held at the Hōryūji temple in 1884, leading to the discovery, by ERNEST FRANCISCO FENOLLOSA and OKAKURA TENSHIN (see below, § 4.3), of a “secret Buddha” (*hibutsu*), the celebrated statue of Kannon Bosatsu in the Yumedono pavilion. Other needs were included in the project to ensure the collective identification of imperial history with national culture. In 1889 the functions of the Museum Department, until then under the Ministry for Agriculture and Commerce (*Nōshōmushō*), were transferred to the Ministry for the Imperial Household (*Kunai-shō*).⁴² The museum itself, which from 1882 had occupied the beautiful two-storey Victorian building designed by the British architect Josiah Conder for the Second National Industrial Exhibition, was officially denominated the Imperial Museum (*Teikoku Hakubutsukan*). “Museumized” art, which by definition had moral and educational purposes, was thus transposed into the ideological and political sphere of imperial func-

40 Cf. FAILLA (*supra* note 36) 20-22.

41 Cf. FAILLA (*supra* note 36) 20-22.

42 Cf. GUTH (*supra* note 2) 318.

tions. The ideological approach from those Meiji years is alive today, and is still the conception underlying the contemporary legislation of protection of cultural properties.

During the 1880s, the cultural debate was very much stimulated by the presence of foreign residents, especially those employed by the government as teachers in the recently instituted universities, schools and academies. Comparison with Western theory and criticism on the subject of tradition and modernism, “art” and “decoration”, “Industry” and “craftwork”, not only influenced the formulation of guiding principles, previously non-existent in Japan, with regard to the value and genre of productions, but also contributed to orienting the position of the Establishment on the involvement, the role and the cultural responsibility that the political powers could and should assume and develop a propos. As is well known, the protagonists of this debate were twofold: on the one hand, the “new faction” (*shinha*), represented by Ernest Francisco Fenollosa with his disciple Okakura Tenshin, who had obtained and monopolized from 1884 the institutional support of the Ministry of Education; and on the other hand, the “old faction” (*kyūha*), guided by *Ryūchikai* and made up of various exponents of the grand bureaucracy of culture. This debate resolved itself towards the end of the 1880s and during the 1890s into a powerful movement of conscious re-evaluation of ancient, medieval and contemporary Japanese art and of what, within it, were authentic, original Japanese creations and inventions. Obviously, this was of use in the affirmation of *tennōsei ideorogii*, since statesmen and bureaucrats placed «a growing emphasis on the promotion of identification and national pride centred on the figure of the emperor».⁴³ The *tennōsei ideorogii* was officially inaugurated with the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution in 1889 and firmly consolidated the following year in the *Kyōiku ni Kansuru Chokugo* (Imperial Rescript on Education), whose reading proves extremely useful to understanding the ideological, political and socio-cultural milieu of the moment:

«Know Ye, Our subjects:

Our Imperial Ancestors [*waga kōso kōso*] have founded Our Empire on a basis broad and everlasting and have deeply and firmly implanted virtue; Our subjects ever united in loyalty [*chū*] and filial piety [*kō*] have from generation to generation illustrated the beauty thereof. This is the glory of the fundamental character of Our Empire [*kore waga kokutai no seika*], and herein also lies the source of Our education [*ni shite kyōiku no engen mata jitsu ni koko ni sonsu*]. Ye, Our subjects, be filial to your parents, affectionate to your brothers and sisters; as husbands and wives be harmonious, as friends true; bear yourselves in modesty and moderation; extend your benevolence to all; pursue learning and cultivate arts [*gyō o narai*], and thereby develop intellectual faculties and perfect moral powers; furthermore advance public good and promote common interests; always respect the Constitution and observe the laws; should emergency arise, offer yourselves coura-

43 Cf. GUTH (*supra* note 2) 318.

gously to the State [*giyūkō ni hōshi*]; and thus guard and maintain the prosperity of Our Throne coeval with heaven and earth. So shall ye not only be Our good and faithful subjects, but render illustrious the best traditions of your forefathers [*chūryō no shinmin*].

The Way here set forth is indeed the teaching bequeathed by Our Imperial Ancestors, to be observed alike by Their Descendants and the subjects, infallible for all ages and true in all places. It is Our wish to lay it to heart in all reverence, in common with you, Our subjects, that we may all thus attain to the same virtue. The 30th day of the 10th month of the 23rd year of Meiji.

Mutsuhito [Imperial Sign Manual. Imperial Seal]».44

As is well known, the *Kyōiku Chokugo* was made part of the compulsory school education, and continued to increase its ideological power and its mighty educational effects during the next 55 years, until the end of World War II in 1945.

The grand survey of documentation was conducted over a decade (1888-97) by the Ad Hoc Committee for the Inventory of Japanese Cultural Heritage (*Rinji Zenkoku Hōmotsu Shuchō Kyoku*) presided over by KUKI RYŪICHI, who became Director of the Imperial Museum in 1888. Approximately 215,000 works were examined⁴⁵ and classified into five principal categories – ancient documents (*komonjo*), paintings (*kaiga*), sculptures (*chōkoku*), decorative arts (*bijutsu kōgei*) and calligraphy (*shoseki*). These classifications attest to the coexistence of traditional Japanese approaches and new methods borrowed from the West.⁴⁶ This great initiative of documentation constituted the basis for the promulgation in 1897 of the *Koshaji Hozon Hō* (Law for the Protection of Ancient Temples and Shrines), with which the State recognized its institutional, legal and financial responsibility for the protection of the national cultural heritage. In particular, the law established the granting of funds for the conservation of objects and buildings designated as treasures (*hōmotsu*). Among these works, those of exceptional historical significance or of supreme value as artistic models were to assume the dignity of national treasures (*kokuhō*), and had, therefore, to be made periodically available for exhibition at the Imperial Museums in Tōkyō and Kyōto, the latter having been inaugurated in 1897. In this way religious works were deprived of their sacredness and of their religious function, while their cultural value and their public use for educational purposes were amplified and emphasised.

44 This is the official English translation of the Imperial Rescript on Education, available for free, together with the original text, at the Meiji Jingū Kinenkan in Tōkyō. For the sake of clarity, I have inserted in the translated text the *rōmaji* transliterations, in italics and within brackets, of some of the original Japanese expressions.

45 Cf. E.P. CONANT, The French Connection: Emile Guimet's Mission to Japan: a Cultural Context for Japonisme, in H. CONROY / S. DAVIS / W. PATTERSON (eds.), Japan in Transition: Thought and Action in the Meiji Era (Farley Dickinson University Press, Rutherford N.J. 1984) 132.

46 GUTH (*supra* note 2) 318.

Two other new state institutions appeared soon after the other. The Tōkyō School of Fine Arts (*Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō*, now Tōkyō University of Fine Arts and Music) was authorised by the Ministry of Education in 1887 and opened in 1889,⁴⁷ and the Imperial Household Artists (*Teishitsu Gigeiin*) was founded in 1891.⁴⁸ As Guth has rightly put it, «the recognition that traditional culture might serve as a tool in nation-building was the driving force behind these developments».⁴⁹ In this way the complexity of traditions transmitted to the new generations and the abilities and skills embodied in living artists – that is to say, the two key expressions, antique and contemporary, of artistic culture – were rendered an integral part, to put it in the terms of the *Kyōiku Chokugo*, of the «glorious essence of Our Empire» (*waga kokutai no seika*).

In the second half of the 1890s, the state undertook a comprehensive project of putting art and culture into a new context, markedly oriented towards the “tutelage of the national essence” (*kokusui hozon*). The Japanese victory won in the Sino-Japanese war in 1894-95 confirmed the prophetic potential of the slogan *fukoku kyōhei*, “rich nation, strong army”. At the same time, the state perfected the ideology of the “national treasure” as an integral part of collective cultural identification, infusing it into the principles and spirit of the *Koshaji Hozon Hō* (Law for the Protection of Ancient Temples and Shrines), the first law of tutelage issued in 1897. The *Koshaji Hozon Hō* was repealed in 1950, after the epochal changes following World War II made necessary its abolition and the promulgation of a new law, adequate to the times as well as to the changing values of society and culture.

3. *The Re-evaluation of the Feudal Past and the Birth of the “Edo period”, a New Historical and Cultural Entity, at the End of the 1880s*

The new socio-economic forces which developed during the Tokugawa period (1603-1868) were an important factor in transforming society, bringing with them the innovations of Edo urban culture and customs. The *chōnin*, the city middle class living in Edo, Kyōto and Ōsaka, produced and consumed literature, theatre, fashion and figurative arts, expressing their own complex, stratified culture, characterized by unmistakable forms, contents and styles. They were also able to establish, nourish, and maintain their culture down the course of time, as they owned and managed the resources for propagating it and increasing its social importance. Their publishing houses issued novels and popular

47 Cf. KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) Vol. 8, 69b *ad vocem* “Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music. Also, E.P. CONANT, The Tokyo School of Fine Arts and the Development of Nihonga, 1889-1906, in: CONANT / OWYOUNG / RIMER (eds.) (*supra* note 34) 25-35; C. YOSHIDA, The Tokyo School of Fine Arts, in: CONANT / OWYOUNG / RIMER (eds.) (*supra* note 34) 86-87.

48 Cf. D. SATŌ, Imperial Household Artists (*Teishitsu gigeiin*), in: CONANT / OWYOUNG / RIMER (eds.) (*supra* note 34) 92-93.

49 Cf. GUTH (*supra* note 2) 318.

drama, illustrated books, calendars, almanacs for the houses of pleasure and collections of prints which advertised fashionable venues, publicized the images of courtesans, depicted the people's pastimes in the various seasons, famous places in the Capital, perspective views (*ukie*) and, from the last quarter of the 18th century, wonderful landscapes and panoramas too.

The Kabuki theatres put on stage and glorified the world and the life of the *chônin*, giving voice to their aspirations and the events of their lives, transforming their successes and reversals of fortune and the ups and downs of their existence into heroic saga. The Kabuki made them heroes, sometimes fair and generous, sometimes base and vulgar: no matter if shrewd or foolish, enterprising or criminal, honest or despicable, decent or libertine, whatever the case, they were heroes. In this respect, the Kabuki dramas offered a vast reservoir of legend transformed into history and, conversely, of history theatrically amplified into resounding, legendary feats and vicissitudes.

Ukiyoe paintings (*nikuhitsu ukiyoe*) and polychrome prints (*nishikie hanga*) represented the establishment of the new urban style of life called the "floating world" (*ukiyo*), which illustrated the literary, theatrical and figurative culture of the *chônin*. Polychrome prints proved an extremely effective means of fixing the aesthetic excess of the Kabuki actors, courtesans and *geisha* – stars of the "floating world" idolized by the public – in images of great intensity and figurative power. In addition: by means of allusion and wordplay, metaphor and figurative parody (*yatsushi*, *e-asobi*, *mitatee*) the prints expressed in humorous mode the cultural antagonism the *chônin* felt towards classical, traditional culture, by ironically manipulating courtly themes and transposing them into the present-day. There were, as well, numerous circles of "crazy poetry" (*kyôka*) which published collections of poems illustrated by great artists, and which privately financed the printing of *surimono*, luxury prints in very limited editions. The Shogunate observed with great concern the establishment and growth of the Ukiyo popular culture, and repeatedly attempted to check, control and repress. The activities and habits of the *chônin* often became the target of prohibitions and sanctions established by laws on censorship and consumption. With the sumptuary reforms of the Kansei (1789-1801) and Tenpô (1830-1844) periods, controls and bans were introduced to limit the activities of artists and publishers.⁵⁰

While Meiji cultural ideology was forming and evolving, the hierarchy of meanings and artistic values was gradually changed and adapted to the political demands of the

50 J. ROBERTSON, *Takarazuka. Sexual Politics and Popular Culture in Modern Japan* (University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1998) 28: «For J. Fiske, popular culture exceeds and escapes "the norms of ideological control and in that way becomes a site of parody, resistance, evasion, and alternatives of and to convention and the status quo (1989:114). He perceives of popular culture as a domain of social relations characterized by struggle, opposition, and reaction to the forces of domination, be they capitalist, consumerist, sexist, ethnocentric, or racist.» See J. FISKE, *Understanding popular culture* (Unwin Hyman, Boston 1989) 114, 21.

different moments in time. A pronounced underestimation of some of the art productions from the period of the Tokugawa Shogunate was part of this process. Only minor importance was attributed to Ukiyoe paintings and prints or, for example, to the Nanga paintings of 18th century literati. So that, while these works of art were scarcely considered in their own land, foreigners fell in love with them, collected them by their thousands, making them known and appreciated on international antiquarian markets and in Western collections. It was only later, in the late 1920s and 1930s, that the Japanese began to fully re-evaluate and reconsider them.

At the end of the 1880s, however, still within the Meiji period, a movement arose for the re-estimation of the feudal past, thanks to which the era of the Tokugawa Shogunate was perceived and represented as a precise historical and cultural entity, the “Edo period” (*Edo jidai*). The abolition of the military regime, in fact, had not brought about a change in the life style of ordinary people and had not managed to eliminate those who preferred bygone days. Despite the Restoration, there were many defenders of the past in Japan: but before they could express and promote a movement to re-evaluate the Tokugawa period and its culture, a considerable lapse of time had to pass between the end of the Shogunate and the new generation. In 1889 the Edo Society (*Edokai*) was founded in Tôkyô, whose statutory aim consisted in safeguarding and recording names, places and proofs of the culture of Edo before they disappeared. *Edokai* had two newspapers, which were also published from 1889 onwards, the Edo Society Journal (*Edokai zasshi*) and the Edo Newspaper (*Edo Shinbun*), by means of which the conscious, retrospective use, for the first time, of the name Edo both as a place name and as a historical and cultural entity became widespread.⁵¹ The paladins of Edo, who certainly lacked neither traces of nostalgia nor motives for revenge with regard to the Restoration, were in part conservatives to the bitter end, in part anti-oligarchs. They asserted that the Tokugawa era was «the period in which Japanese civilization achieved its greatest progress and development (*shinpo hattatsu*)»,⁵² and, by so declaring, openly opposed the propaganda of the Restoration and the claim on which it most prided itself - namely, the lightning-fast achievement, in scarcely twenty years, of formidable, modern “civilization and enlightenment”, which had succeeded in liquidating the ancient, feudal world of Edo.⁵³

The two succeeding reappraisals of Edo culture took place at the end of the Meiji period and at the end of the Taishô period. The progress made by the research and studies of the last fifty years has determined a substantial reinstatement of the historical

51 I refer to GLUCK (*supra* note 1) 24, 319 note 24, where credit is given for this topic: «According to Ogi Shinzô, this activity marked the first conscious retrospective use of Edo as a place-name and cultural artifact. *Tôkyô shomin seikatsushi kenkyû* (Nihon hōsô shuppan kyōkai, 1979), 11-23».

52 Cf. GLUCK (*supra* note 1) 24.

53 Cf. GLUCK (*supra* note 1) *passim*.

and cultural value of the Edo-Tôkyô phenomenon, which led to the foundation of the magnificent Edo-Tôkyô Museum (*Edo-Tôkyô Hakubutsukan*). Situated in the vicinity of the Ryôgoku Bridge, itself a symbol of the Edo way of life, the Museum is dedicated to the history of four hundred years of urban civilization, illustrating the continuity and the profound changes, the historical and social transformations, the traumas of earthquakes, fires and wars from 1600 to the present day.⁵⁴

IV. THE WESTERN INFLUENCE ON THE ART PRODUCTIONS, THE ART HISTORY, AND THE SCIENTIFIC CULTURE OF THE MEIJI PERIOD

Up to here, only passing references have been made to a very prominent phenomenon in the process of modernization of Japanese culture of the Meiji period, that is, the assimilation of Western views, ideas, and methods of classification of the arts. As already mentioned, during the final years of the Shogunate, the Japanese schools devoted to Western learning played a fundamental role in dismantling prejudices against the outer world. When the process of acquiring ideas, information and knowledge from Western printed sources started to reveal its natural limits, it became necessary to find direct access to more effective and vital forms of learning. The feudal administrations started sending abroad, to the schools and universities of Europe and North America, some of their best minds. As already mentioned, MACHIDA HISANARI (1838-97), who later became the first director of the Museum Office, had been sent to study in London in 1866 from the Satsuma fief, and thereby was exposed to the influential British point of view as regard the task and function of museums as centres for spreading the national culture. Also KUKI RYÛICHI (1852-1931), Machida's young and bright secretary, who had been working at the Ministry of Education from 1871 and was to become the director of the Tôkyô Imperial Museum in 1888, experienced important journeys abroad. In 1878 he escorted to Paris the works of art sent by Japan to the International Exposition, and from 1884 until 1887 he was minister in the Japanese Embassy in New York, where he notoriously devoted much of his diplomatic work to the diffusion of the appreciation for Japanese art among the social and cultural *élite* of America. Previous mention has been made of the consequences brought to the specific field by the Iwakura Diplomatic Mission, which toured Europe and the United States of America in 1871-73, and of its effects on the internationalisation of Japan's image. The next section of this Article is devoted to the description of the contributions of "hired foreigners" (*oyatoi gaikokujin*) to culture, technique and art, which acted as specific strengtheners in the phenomenon of the internationalisation of Meiji culture.

54 Cf. EDO-TOKYO HISTORICAL SOCIETY FOUNDATION, Guide to Edo-Tokyo Museum (Toppan Printing Co., Tokyo 1995).

1. *The Contribution of “Hired Foreigners” to Modernisation and the Introduction of Western Art Techniques*

GOTTFRIED WAGENER (1831-1892) was a German chemist and physicist. Born in Hanover, he came to Nagasaki in 1868 as a consultant on the building of a factory and the following year started working on the perfecting of the Arita kilns and their technical devices. In 1871 he started working for the Meiji government as a Professor of Physics and Applied Chemistry at the *Daigakkô*, the predecessor of the University of Tôkyô. His contribution to the organization and participation of Japan in the Vienna (1873) and Philadelphia (1876) Expositions was instrumental, and Wagener devoted the most part of his work to the improvement in quality of the traditional arts and crafts (porcelain and enamels) by facilitating the adoption of innovative technologies of Western origin and significantly influencing the training of several Japanese artists and craftsmen of his time. The technical and aesthetic refinements of Arita porcelain and of *cloisonné* enamels are the results of his work. Among other innovations, Wagener introduced the *champlevé* technique in the production of enamels. From 1884 he directed the Department of Ceramic and Glass in the *Tôkyô Shokkô Gakkô* (now the Tôkyô Institute of Technology). On the government's appointment he projected and built the first modern factory producing ceramic and porcelain. He also helped founding the Imperial Museum.⁵⁵ Wagener died in Tokyo and is buried in the foreign section of Aoyama Cemetery.

EDOARDO CHIOSSONE (1833-1898) was Professor of Engraving and Design. Born in Arenzano near Genova, he was employed in Florence by the National Bank in the Kingdom of Italy (*Banca Nazionale del Regno d'Italia*) and on its behalf worked in Germany at the Dondorf-Naumann Graphic Industries in Frankfurt (1868-74). At the invitation of the Japanese government he reached Tôkyô in January 1875 and came to direct the Engraving Division of the Printing Bureau of the Ministry of Finance (*Ôkurashô Insatsu Kyoku*), where he worked until 1891, carrying out several duties, including acting as special instructor in the procedures and techniques of industrial engraving and printing. Chiossone engraved over 500 metal plates for postage and monopoly stamps, banknotes and bonds and was responsible for the high quality image that state finance conveyed through the paper values in Japan. In addition to his prominent contribution to the representation of masterpieces of ancient art by collaborating on the illustrated inventory *Kokka Yohô* referred to above, Chiossone introduced Western-style portraiture for official and diplomatic use into Meiji Establishment circles. As well as depicting the imperial couple, he drew portraits of great statesmen, members of court, diplomats, ministers and high-ranking military officials. He became a passionate collector of Japanese art and, thanks to his training and ability, and the personal favour with which he was held among the political and cultural *élite*, he was able to build up the important collection today belonging to Genoa City Council. In 1886 Chiossone became

55 T. MURAMATSU, *Westerners in the Modernization of Japan* (Tokyo 1995) 80-85.

honorary member of the *Ryūchikai*. Chiossone continued to live in Japan even after his retirement in 1891. He died in Tōkyō in 1898 and was buried in the Aoyama cemetery, in the section for foreigners.⁵⁶

While Chiossone's contract was directly stipulated by him with his Japanese employer, another three Italian artists – the painter Antonio Fontanesi (1818-82), sculptor Vincenzo Ragusa (1841-1927) and architect Giovanni Vincenzo Cappelletti – were invited to Japan in 1876 thanks to the mediation of Italian diplomats, to teach Western Painting, Sculpture and Architecture at the Technical School of Fine Arts (*Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō*).

ANTONIO FONTANESI (1818-1882) was a landscape painter. He was born and studied in Reggio Emilia, initially working as a scenographer. A believer in Independency, he was exiled in 1848 for his participation in Garibaldi's activities. During the decade of 1855-65 he travelled and worked in Switzerland, France and Great Britain, and was influenced by the painting styles of Turner, Daubigny, Ravier and Corot. He fought for the independence of Italy in 1860 and became Professor of Landscape Painting in the Turin Academy of Fine Arts (1869-1876). The Japanese government offered him a position to teach Western Painting (*yōga*) at the Technical School of Fine Arts (*Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō*), newly founded within the Tōkyō Polytechnic (*Kōbu Daigakkō*). Fontanesi introduced to Japan the materials and techniques, as well as the theory, of Western style painting. He brought from Italy materials and tools, teaching pencil and charcoal sketching, pastel and oil painting techniques. He lectured on extemporaneous landscape painting, and on sketching and drawing from life. He also taught Anatomy, Perspective and Theory of Art. Fontanesi had to leave Japan in 1878 on account of his health problems, before the expiration of his contract. Before his departure, however, oil painting in Western style had already become deeply and firmly rooted in the young generation educated by the Italian painter, albeit the increasing disfavour that in the following years stroke the arts imported from abroad.⁵⁷

VINCENZO RAGUSA (1841-1927) was an Italian sculptor born in Palermo. He accepted the offer of the Japanese government to teach Western Sculpture at the Technical School of Fine Arts (*Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō*). Ragusa taught there from 1876 until 1882, introducing to Japan the European techniques of bronze casting, as well as the method of modelling from life and the employ of clay and plaster on infrastructures of metal thread. Ragusa built a foundry within his Tōkyō home, where he also taught private lessons. Upon expiration of this contract in 1882, he went to Palermo along with his Japanese wife-to-be, KIYOHARA TAMA (1861-1939), and opened a school of arts and crafts. His teachings had an important impact on the new generation of Japanese sculp-

56 For Chiossone's comprehensive biography see FAILLA (*supra* note 37). See also MURAMATSU (*supra* note 55) 107-113.

57 Cf. KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) vol. 2, 304a *ad vocem* "Fontanesi, Antonio". See also MURAMATSU (*supra* note 55) 170-173.

tors.⁵⁸ During his 7-year stay in Japan, Ragusa formed a collection of ethnographic objects, today belonging to the “Luigi Pigorini” National Museum of Ethnography in Rome.

GIOVANNI VINCENZO CAPPELLETTI (dates unknown) was an Italian architect, probably from Lombardia in Northern Italy, whose biography is scarcely known. He arrived in Tōkyō along with Fontanesi and Ragusa in 1876 and became a professor of Western Architecture at the Technical School of Fine Arts (*Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō*), where he principally taught Geometry and Perspective. In 1879 he started working in the Direction of Public Buildings, where he projected, among others, two important buildings no more extant: one of them, called Yūshūkan, is known from photographs. Cappelletti left Japan for the United States of America in 1885.⁵⁹

JOSIAH CONDER (1852-1920) was born in London. He became a disciple to William Burges at the Royal Institute of British Architects, where he graduated. Invited by the Japanese government, he was no doubt the most influential Western architect of the Meiji period. From 1877 until 1888 he taught at the Tōkyō Polytechnic (*Kōbu Daigakkō*), also functioning as a consultant to the Ministry of Public Works. After retirement, he continued to reside in Japan and to work as free-lance professional architect, preparing and accomplishing projects upon private as well as public commission. During his 44-year stay in Japan, Conder projected and realised some eighty buildings, including the Rokumeikan, the symbol of the modernization of Japanese society and its costumes, thus creating the new “urban countenance” of modernisation, and shaping the entire next generation of Japanese architects, who worked from the late Meiji period until the first half of the Twentieth Century.⁶⁰

2. *The Birth of Scientific Archaeology: Edward Sylvester Morse and William Gowland*

Scientific archaeology was born thanks to the efforts of the American Edward Sylvester Morse and the Britain William Gowland. Morse studied Jōmon pre-History, while Gowland carried out extensive surveys and methodological descriptions of the great burial mounds (*kofun*) in the Kinki region.

EDWARD SYLVESTER MORSE (1838-1925) was born in Portland, Maine. He studied conchology at Harvard University and taught at Bowdoin College, Maine, from 1871 to 1874. In 1877, he went to Japan on his own expense to carry out research on the brachiopods of the Pacific Ocean, establishing a laboratory of marine biology at Enoshima, in the vicinity of Kamakura. Shortly thereafter, he was offered a position to teach

58 Cf. KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) vol. 6, 276b *ad vocem* “Ragusa, Vincenzo”. See also MURAMATSU (*supra* note 55) 170, 173-177.

59 I synthesise Cappelletti’s biography notes from IWAKURA (*supra* note 21) 158, cat. 98.

60 I quote and synthesise from KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) Vol. 1, 349b *ad vocem* “Conder, Josiah”. See also MURAMATSU (*supra* note 55) 45-50.

Zoology in the newly founded Tōkyō University. During the two following years, Morse organised the University Department of Zoology and decisively contributed to the future foundation of the Ueno Imperial Museum. Morse was responsible for introducing to Japan the modern scientific methods of research and study in the field of Biology and Zoology. Moreover, he disseminated Darwin's theory of the evolution. Morse is also credited with the recognition and classification of an archaeological record of the foremost importance in the Meiji period, that is, the Jōmon prehistory, a pre-agricultural culture based on hunting, fishing and gathering characterised by the production of earthenware decorated with cord-marked motifs (*jōmon*). In 1879, along the Tōkyō-Yokohama railway, then under construction, Morse noted the Ômori shell mound, an immense shell midden (*kaizuka*) that reminded him the similar prehistoric shell middens of the Algonquin people in Northern America. The excavations, personally directed by Morse, revealed and spread awareness about a remote prehistoric past, and at the same time gave start to scientific archaeology in Japan. He went back to the United States of America in 1879, but he came back to Japan in 1882, and stayed over until 1883, forming the famous collection of ancient and modern ceramics amounting to some 5,000 pieces, which belongs today to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.⁶¹ Morse also made important contributions to the study of Japanese people, their local customs and ways of life.⁶² His extensive collection of Japanese folk artifacts was presented to the Peabody Museum of Salem in 1917, where he was appointed director. On account of his cultural achievements and merits he was bestowed with two imperial honours: the Order of the Rising Sun (1898) and the Order of the Sacred Treasure (1922).⁶³

WILLIAM GOWLAND (1842-1922)⁶⁴ was a British metallurgist. He was employed by the Ôsaka Mint from 1872 until 1889, visited and carried out research on 406 burials, writing down systematic descriptions of 140 of them. His very important collection of archaeological objects from the Kofun period, today belonging to the British Museum, principally comes out of two sites: the Shibayama Dolmen in the area of Ikoma mountain south of Ôsaka, and the Rokuya Dolmen in Tanba Province. Gowland published the

61 The collection was contributed by Morse himself in 1890 to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, where he served as curator after 1892. The catalogue of the collection offers a thorough classification of the wares according to place of production and type of kiln: E.S. MORSE, *Catalogue of Japanese Pottery* by Edward S. Morse (Ticknor and Co., 1901).

62 E.S. MORSE, *Japanese Homes and their Surroundings* (Ticknor and Co., 1886); ID., *Japan Day by Day* (Houghton Mifflin Co., 1917).

63 I quote and synthesise from KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) Vol. 5, 256a *ad vocem* "Morse, Edward Sylvester". See also MURAMATSU (*supra* note 55) 122-127. There are two seminal works on Morse's life and work: D.G. WAYMAN, *Edward Sylvester Morse: a Biography* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1942), and T. MORIYA, *Mosu to Nihon* [Morse and Japan] (Shogakukan, Tōkyō 1988).

64 On Gowland's biography, see: L. SMITH Lawrence / V. HARRIS / T. CLARK, *Japanese Art: Masterpieces in the British Museum* (Oxford University Press, New York 1990) 16.

results of his seminal research in three prominent articles,⁶⁵ thus revealing the main features of the first state organisation of ancient Japan, which occupied the central area of the fertile Yamato plain from the early 4th to the early 8th century (today corresponding to the territory of Nara Prefecture). The period has been named for the imposing, “ancient burials” (*kofun*) that constitute the main feature of that early phase of Japan’s civilisation.

3. *The Historical and Aesthetic Re-evaluation of Japanese Art Traditions:
Ernest Francisco Fenollosa and Okakura Tenshin*

The American Professor of Philosophy Ernest Francisco Fenollosa and his disciple Okakura Tenshin devoted themselves to making Japanese artistic traditions historically and aesthetically valued during the 1880s and 1890s.

ERNEST FRANCISCO FENOLLOSA (1853-1908) was a native of Salem in Massachusetts, United States of America. He graduated in Philosophy at Harvard University in 1874. There, he kept doing research until 1877, when he started to study the history of painting at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. The turning point for Fenollosa was in 1878, when in Boston he met with Edward Sylvester Morse, the zoologist who in Japan had recently discovered and excavated the Ômori Shell Mound. Through Morse’s mediation, he was offered to teach Western Philosophy at the University of Tôkyô, where he in fact taught Philosophy and Political Economy (1878-80), Philosophy and Logic (1880-86), forming the new generation of Japan’s intellectuals and thinkers. Several of his numerous pupils became personalities of note in the cultural life of the late Meiji and Taishô periods. He built up a collection of great importance, which is housed in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts and, in part, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Among them it is worth mentioning Okakura Tenshin. Known for his unsparing efforts in favour of the study of traditional arts and of their preservation especially during the years 1886-90, Fenollosa was among the most fervid founders of the Tôkyô School of Fine Arts (*Tôkyô Bijutsu Gakkô*) and contributed to the organization of new administrative, technical and scientific structures in the field of history of art and culture. Director of the Oriental Department in the Boston Museum of Fine Arts (1890-97), he was again in Japan from 1897 to 1900. Back in the United States of America, he taught in the Columbia University, New York. Many of his numerous articles on Japanese art were published posthumously and were edited by EZRA POUND. He built up a collection of Japanese art of great importance, which is housed partly in the Boston

65 W. GOWLAND, *The Dolmens of Japan and their builders* (1899); ID., *Dolmen Collection: Objects from Japanese Burial Mounds and Dolmen* (s.d.); ID., *Metals and Metalworking in Old Japan* (1914).

Museum of Fine Arts, partly in the Freer Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., and partly in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.⁶⁶

OKAKURA TENSHIN (1862-1913), also known by the pen name KAKUZÔ, was born in Yokohama. He started the study of English language early and, aged 15, became interpreter to Fenollosa as well as his and pupil in the University of Tôkyô. Okakura, who was particularly tied to Fenollosa, after graduation worked in the sector of national cultural properties at the Ministry of Education and collaborated closely, in terms of practice and ideas, with KUKI RYÛICHI (1852-1931). In 1889 he was among the founders of the Tôkyô School of Fine Arts (*Tôkyô Bijutsu Gakkô*), which he, in fact, directed until 1898. He also held the office of curator of the Imperial Museum, contributed to the publication of *Kokka*, the first art magazine in modern Japan, and was an active promoter and organizer of exhibitions for the new generation of painters in traditional Japanese style (*nihonga*). A passionate defender of Japanese traditions, he opposed the indiscriminate spread of Western-style oil painting (*yôga*), and publicly praised the aesthetic, formal, philosophical and theoretical virtues of calligraphy, *chanoyu* (the Way of Tea) and the arts of entertainment. Because of a disagreement with the Minister of Education, he left public office and founded the Japan Art Institute (*Nihon Bijutsuin*),⁶⁷ a private academy which aspired to a synthesis of the formal principles of East and West. In 1905 he was assistant curator at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. In the last years of his life he alternated stays in Boston and Japan and travelled in China and India. He collaborated with Fenollosa and travelled with him in Europe and the United States, studying Western teaching methods in the field of art history.⁶⁸

The efforts of these important foreigners placed Japan in a strong position in respect of national ideology pertaining to art and culture. Their students and acquaintances further developed their ideas during the first half of the 20th century, including by means of legislation.

66 I quote and synthesise from KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) Vol. 2, 251b-252a *ad vocem* “Fenollosa, Ernest Francisco”. See also MURAMATSU (*supra* note 55) 164-169.

67 A. MATSUURA, The Japan Art Institute, in: CONANT / OWYOUNG / RIMER (eds.) (*supra* note 34) 102-103.

68 I quote and synthesise from KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) Vol. 6, 79b *ad vocem* “Okakura Kakuzô”.

V. THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

1. *The Mingei Undô Movement for the Folk Crafts*

Founded and guided by YANAGI MUNEYOSHI (1889-1961), also known as Sôetsu,⁶⁹ the movement for the folk arts and crafts⁷⁰ was very active in the decade 1926-36. It was strongly influenced by the so-called Taishô Democracy of the early 1920s, which regarded the people as the source of democracy. In 1926, Yanagi himself coined the term *mingei*. He intended to define provenance and function (*yô*), destination and “the uses of the spirit” (*kokoro e no yô*) of the folk crafts as distinguished from works of art (*bijutsu*) as well as from simple crafts (*kôgei*). In 1927, Yanagi founded a working commune for *mingei* artists in Kyôto. He drew its model out of the European guilds of the Middle Age, and was also influenced by John Ruskin’s and William Morris’s theories.

The movement had three main objectives, all aimed at protecting and evaluating the popular arts and crafts (*mingei*): (1) gather and exhibit *mingei* objects according to the criteria of ordering and classification established by Yanagi; (2) conduct extensive surveys of research, study and documentation accompanied and followed by public activities in order to spread the views and ideas of the movement; and (3) raise funds to provide financial support and devise new forms of organisation to foster the commitment of craftspeople to produce and sell genuine *mingei* objects.

The first objective was reached in 1936 with the opening of the Museum of Popular Arts and Crafts of Japan (*Nihon Mingeikan*) in Tôkyô, Komaba, thanks to the endowment of a businessman, ÔHARA MAGOSABURÔ (1880-1943). The movement had explicit anti-modern tendencies, as Yanagi and his associates witnessed the dissolution of craft production caused by industrial development, which destroyed and superseded old village and country communities. Focusing on the keynotes of ethnicism, localism, diversity, and minority, the movement also supported the Korean independence and the protection of Okinawan dialects. The *Mingei Undô* continued its activities during World War II.

2. *Summary of the Legislation Relating to Cultural Properties and National Heritage Between the two World Wars and after World War II until 1950*

Before the end of the Meiji period, the ideological mainstream of cultural heritage policies and the politics of public intervention in the specific field of cultural properties

69 Cf. KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) Vol. 8, 314a *ad vocem* “Yanagi Muneyoshi”.

70 Cf. KODANSHA ENCYCLOPEDIA OF JAPAN (*supra* note 4) Vol. 2, 293b-296a *ad vocem* “Folk Crafts”. Moreover, a classic, very well known, and still available manual is K. MURAOKA / K. OKAMURA, *Folk Arts and Crafts of Japan* (Weatherhill / Heibonsha, New York and Tokyo 1973, reprint 1976).

had been clearly established. The legislation introduced during the succeeding Taishō (1912-1926) and Shōwa (1926-1989) periods shows the state commitment to progressively extending its responsibility for the protection of nature, environment and architecture as well as the quest to perfect the forms of tutelage for both the “national treasures” (*kokuhō*) and the “important objects of art” (*jūyō bijutsuhin*). The list of the laws and ordinances issued between 1919 and 1949⁷¹ – although all of them were abolished in 1950, when the new Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties (*Bunkazai Hogo Hō*) was enacted⁷² – gives us at least an overall idea about the widened state commitment on the protection of cultural properties and national heritage between the two World Wars:

- National Treasures Preservation Law (*Kokuhō Hozon Hō*, Law No. 17 / 1929);
- Law concerning the Preservation of Important Objects of Art (*Jūyō Bijutsuhin Tō no Hozon ni kansuru Hōritsu*, Law No. 43 / 1933);
- Law for the Preservation of Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty and Natural Monuments (*Shiseki Meishō Tennen Kinenbutsu Hozon Hō*, Law No. 44 / 1919);
- Ordinance for the Enforcement of the National Treasures Preservation Law (*Kokuhō Hozon Hō Shikō Rei*, Imperial Ordinance No. 210 / 1929);
- Ordinance for the Enforcement of the Law for the Preservation of Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty and Natural Monuments (*Shiseki Meishō Tennen Kinenbutsu Hozon Hō Shikō Rei*, Imperial Ordinance no. 499 / 1919);
- Regulations governing the Organization of the National Treasures Preservation Society (*Kokuhō Hozon Kaikan Sei*, Imperial Ordinance No. 211 / 1929);
- Order for the Research and Deliberation Council on Important Art Objects (*Jūyō Bijutsuhin Tō Chōsa-Shingikai Rei*, Cabinet Order No. 251 / 1949); and
- Order for the Research Council on Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty and Natural Monuments (*Shiseki Meishō Tennen Kinenbutsu Chōsakai Rei*, Cabinet Order no. 252 / 1949).

The great changes in the political and social orientations of Japan which followed World War II, made it necessary to develop a new policy for the protection of cultural properties. Immediately after the war, within the Ministry of Education, the Division for the Promotion of the Arts was created (1945) in order to revitalise national culture and actively promote contemporary art and culture.

71 Cf. H. SHIONO ET AL., *Roppō Zenshō* [Complete collection of the Six Law Codes] (Yūhikaku, Tōkyō 1994) Vol. I, 1695-1706. The list of the abolished laws appears in art. 114, on page 1705.

72 *Roppō Zenshō*, Law No. 214/1950; Engl. transl.: CULTURAL PROPERTIES PROTECTION DEPARTMENT, AGENCY FOR CULTURAL AFFAIRS, GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN, Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. Provisional Translation (brochure, Tokyo, March 1977).

In 1946, the first edition of the National Arts Festival was held. Organized every autumn since, the Festival offers artists and art organizations a stage to perform publicly. According to the Ministry itself, it still is

«a nationwide event organized to provide a large section of the public with an occasion to view and appreciate outstanding achievements in the field of drama, music, dance, entertaining performance and other fields...National Arts Festival Prizes are awarded every year by the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture to those selected as having given the most excellent performances».⁷³

In 1950 the Art Encouragement Prize was instituted, as a means of recognizing the superior achievement and high mastery reached by artists active in the fields of drama, music, dance, literature, fine arts and classical arts.⁷⁴ In 1959 the government started providing subsidies in favour of private organisations that made a great contribution to the progress of art and culture, and established the Purchase of Outstanding Works of Art. By means of this official policy, outstanding paintings, sculptures and other kinds of work by young, upcoming artists are still purchased and displayed in national as well as local museums, in order to encourage the creative efforts of the new generations and enrich the national collections of contemporary art.⁷⁵

As regard the protection of cultural properties in particular, there was a widespread fear that many objects would be dispersed or lost in the terrible post-war confusion. Accordingly, in 1949 the Division for the Protection of Cultural Properties was founded. Only one year later, in 1950, the new *Bunkazai Hogo Hô* (Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties) was promulgated. Newly included in the list of the tutored items two new categories appeared – i.e., the “intangible cultural properties” (*mukeni bunkazai*) and the “buried cultural properties” (*maizô bunkazai*). This law also aimed at consolidating the “system of cultural properties”, making the use and application of the new norms and rules immediate and effective. This law also established the Committee for the Preservation of Cultural Properties (*Bunkazai Hogo Iinkai*) as an adjunct to the Ministry of Education, with an advisory board of specialists on cultural properties preservation.

73 Cf. MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND CULTURE, Japanese Government Policies in Education, Science and Culture 1993. Towards a Culture-Communicating Society (brochure, Tokyo 1993) 42-43.

74 *Ibidem* (*supra* note 70) 44-45.

75 *Ibidem* (*supra* note 70) 45.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die Grundlagen für Japans gegenwärtige Politik, Gesetzgebungsorgane und Regelungen betreffend das nationale Kulturerbe sind tief in den beiden Epochen Edo (1600-1868) und Meiji (1868-1912) verwurzelt. Diese dreihundert Jahre sind beispielhaft für das Paradigma der „Bewahrung und Erneuerung in der Umgestaltung“ und stellen eine unermesslich wichtige Grundlage für die Kultur des heutigen Japan dar.

Dieser Artikel, der den ersten Teil einer längeren Forschungsarbeit darstellt, erforscht und versucht den späten historischen Hintergrund der Edo- und Meiji-Epochen sowie Vorläufer der heutigen japanischen Gesetzgebung über Kulturgüter (bunkazai) zu erklären. Teil zwei, der die gegenwärtige Gesetzeslage sowie die Funktion von nationalen Museen und anderer kultureller Einrichtungen von 1950 bis heute darstellt und kommentiert, wird in der nächsten Ausgaben dieser Zeitschrift erscheinen.

Die Edo-Epoche war durch die Festigung und die Selbsterhaltung des feudalistischen gesellschaftspolitischen Systems sowie durch die Bildung der chônin gekennzeichnet, des städtischen Bürgertums, einer kulturellen und wirtschaftlichen Kraft von höchster Wichtigkeit in der nachfolgenden Umgestaltung der Gesellschaft. Vollkommen versteinert und auf sich selbst konzentriert, brach der Edo-Feudalismus in der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts schnell in sich zusammen. 1868 folgte ihm die Meiji-Ära nach, wörtlich die „Aufgeklärte Herrschaft“, die auf volle Wiederherstellung der kaiserlichen Macht und auf Modernisierung abzielte (kindaika). „Japans Selbstisolierung“ (sakoku), sanktioniert durch die Gesetze der Shôgun, folgte „Japans Öffnung“ (kaikoku) gegenüber dem Rest der Welt und sein Eintritt in weltweiten politischen und wirtschaftlichen Wettbewerb.

Die Meiji-Reformen wurden über einen Zeitraum von über 100 Jahren (etwa 1790-1890) sowohl durch internen ideologischen Druck als auch durch politischen Druck von außerhalb vorbereitet. Ein merklicher Trend für ideologischen und politischen Wandel hatte im späten 18. Jahrhundert begonnen, kulminierte in der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts, während der letzten Jahre des „Endes der Shogunats“ (bakumatsu), und kam später, in den reifen Jahren der Meiji-Ära, zur Ruhe. Während dieser Zeitspanne stellten die Entwicklung der politischen Wahrnehmung von Kunstproduktion, die Änderungen in der Kunstideologie und die fortschrittliche Ausarbeitung einer umfassenden Sichtweise von kulturellem Erbe als nationales Erbe entscheidende Wendepunkte in der Entwicklung der Kulturgeschichte des modernen Japan dar. Die Meiji-Ära brachte beeindruckende, vielfältige Erneuerungen mit sich, die eine Modernisierung der politischen und verwaltungsrechtlichen Struktur des Landes bezweckten und aus Japan einen aktiven Protagonisten in der Geschichte der internationalen Beziehungen machten sollten. Die Meiji-Herrschaft war eine plötzliche und unwiderrufliche politische Kehrtwende, die dramatischen und weiten Konsequenzen für das kulturelle Erbe Raum gaben. In den frühen Jahren der Meiji-Herrschaft, als die neue Staatsideologie Shintô gegründet wurde, wurden ganze Teile der japanischen Gesellschaft – na-

mentlich die Samurai-Kaste und der buddhistische Klerus – entweder vollkommen entlegitimiert oder radikal redimensioniert, während die Klasse der Künstler und Handwerker, die ihnen über Jahrhunderte gedient hatte, in Armut, gesellschaftlicher Zurückweisung und Bedeutungslosigkeit versank. In derselben Zeit mussten die umfangreichen Kunstsammlungen, die über die Jahrhunderte von vielen daimyô- und auch samurai-Traditionen aufgebaut worden waren, ideologische Vorurteile und Zerfall erleiden, während viele buddhistische Klöster, Denkmäler und Tempel, Bilder, Objekte und Relikte aufgrund des Bildersturms und der Fremdenfeindlichkeit der haibutsu-kishaku-Bewegung zerstört wurden. Erst viel später, im Jahre 1897, wurde das erste nationale Fürsorgegesetz unter dem Titel „Gesetz zum Schutz von alten Tempeln und Schreinen“ (Koshaji hozon-hô) erlassen.

Dennoch hing die Schärfung einer umfassenden Sichtweise von Japans kulturellem Erbe wie überall weithin von der Entwicklung einer breiten und beständigen Kenntnis des Staatsgebietes und seiner Kunst und Kultur ab; außerdem war sie von Methoden und Klassifikationssystemen abhängig, mit denen diese Kenntnisse dokumentiert, beschrieben, wiedergegeben und übermittelt werden konnten. Die erste Erhebung, die eine nationale Sichtweise von kulturellem Erbe ausdrückte, wurde 1795-96 durchgeführt. Konzipiert und angeordnet von den Mächten des Shogunats, sollte diese Erhebung Informationen und Dokumentationen über gewisse Kategorien von Objekten zusammentragen, die kulturelle und ideologische Symbole für die mächtigen Schichten der japanischen Gesellschaft darstellten.

Während der Meiji-Herrschaft wurden verschiedene ausführliche Erhebungen in zunehmend größeren Teilen des japanischen Staatsgebiets und über zunehmend weitere Kategorien und Arten von Objekten durchgeführt. Die ideologische Fracht und die Ziele dieser Erhebungen – die 1872 unter der Führung und Verantwortung der Museumsabteilung (Hakubutsu Kyoku) des Bildungsministeriums (Monbushô) begannen und 1897 endeten – variierte je nach politischen Bedürfnissen zu verschiedenen Zeitpunkten und je nach Prioritäten, die den Staatsinteressen geschuldet waren.

Die politischen Strategien der Meiji-Zeit waren in Konzeption und Aktion an sich pragmatisch, wie es in den Slogans „ermutige die Industrie, fördere die Produktion“ (shokusan kôgyô) und „das Alte schätzen, vom Neuen profitieren“ (kôko rikon) zum Ausdruck kommt. Im Gebiet der Kultur verfolgten die Meiji-Herrscher Staats Herrschaft über religiöse Traditionen und eine deutliche Orientierung in Richtung auf utilitaristische Sichtweisen und Errungenschaften. Über buddhistische Tempel und ihre Kunstobjekte wurde eine starke Staatskontrolle aufgebaut, um ihre Bedeutung und Nutzen als Kulturwaren anstelle von religiösen Gegenständen zu betonen. Außerdem wurde alte japanische Kunst als nützlich angesehen, weil sie Inspirationsquellen für die zeitgenössische Kunstproduktion lieferte: Auf diese Weise konnte Japan teure Stücke ins Ausland verkaufen und so Anerkennung in der Völkergemeinschaft ernten. In den 1880ern unternahmen Meiji-Herrscher verschiedene Initiativen und führten eine Kulturpolitik

ein, welche die Kultur in die Einflussosphäre der Ideologie des kaiserlichen Systems (tennōsei ideorogii) brachte.

Wichtige Einflüsse, Innovationen und Entdeckungen kamen von „angeworbenen Ausländern“ (oyatoi gaikokujin) der westlichen Welt, aus Europa und den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika, die in Japan als Lehrer und professionelle Berater auf den verschiedensten Gebieten von Kunst und Wissenschaft arbeiteten. Diese trugen zum Erwecken und Ausweiten der öffentlichen Wahrnehmung in Bezug auf die Motivation der Erhebungen, der Bewahrung und des Schutzes von kulturellem Erbe in seinen verschiedenen Aspekten bei. Darüber hinaus hielten auf diesem Wege neue Kunsttechniken aus dem Westen Einzug sowie neue Methoden, archäologische Funde und Antiquitäten zu erforschen und zu interpretieren.

Unter den Ideen, Begriffen, Konzeptionswerkzeugen und Klassifikationssystemen, die in der Atmosphäre der großen Kulturbürokratie der Meiji-Epoche in Gebrauch kamen, waren einige von feudalistischen Traditionen übernommen, und einige wurden in Japans Kultursystem aus den westlichen Kunst kategorien der Renaissance eingepflanzt. Zum Beispiel wurde der Schlüsselbegriff „Schatz“ (hōmotsu), der von den Meiji-Reformern aus dem Feudalismus übernommen worden war, zu kokuhō oder „nationaler Schatz“ verändert. Dieses Konzept, das auch im heutigen Japan noch präsent ist, ist ein sehr wichtiges Mittel, um den Status, den Rang und die hochsymbolische Bedeutung von national anerkannten Meisterwerken zu definieren, die zur Darstellung von außergewöhnlichen ästhetischen und künstlerischen Werten bestimmt sind. Auf der anderen Seite existierten Begriffe und Konzepte entsprechend den westlichen Kategorien wie „die schönen Künste“, „Malerei“, „Bildhauerei“ und „Architektur“ in Japans Kunsttradition nicht. Sie mussten in der frühen Meiji-Epoche neu erfunden werden, indem die ursprünglichen westlichen Begriffe exakt übersetzt wurden. Auf diese Weise wurden die Wortschöpfungen bijutsu, kaiga, chōkoku und kenchiku entwickelt und seitdem als Klassifikationsmittel angewandt.

Die Neubewertung der Edo-Stadtkultur und der Ukiyoe-Kunst, die in der Mitte der Meiji-Ära begann, und die Migei-Undō-Bewegung für das Volkshandwerk Mitte der 1920er Jahre erweiterten das Bewusstsein von der Komplexität und Reichhaltigkeit von populärer Kunst und Handwerkstraditionen.

Gegen Ende der Meiji-Epoche war die ideologische Hauptströmung der Kulturerbe-Politik und der Staatsintervention im speziellen Gebiet von Kulturgütern klar festgelegt. Die Gesetze, die während der Taishō- (1912-1926) und Shōwa- (1926-1989) Epochen eingeführt wurden, veranschaulichen die Verpflichtung des Staates, fortschreitend seine Verantwortung für den Schutz von Natur, Umwelt und Architektur auszuweiten und das Bestreben, den Schutz für sowohl „nationale Schätze“ (kokuhō) als auch „wichtige Kunstobjekte“ (jūyō bijutsuhin) zu verbessern. Die Gesetze und Verordnungen, die zwischen 1919 und 1949 erlassen wurden – obwohl sie alle 1950 aufgehoben wurden –

geben uns eine Gesamtidee von der erweiterten Staatsverpflichtung zum Schutz von Kulturgütern und nationalem Erbe zwischen den zwei Weltkriegen.

Nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg wurden zwei neue Abteilungen im Bildungsministerium eingerichtet: Die Abteilung für die Förderung der Künste (1945), deren Aufgabe darin bestand, nationale Kultur wiederzubeleben und aktiv zeitgenössische Kunst und Kultur zu fördern, und die Abteilung für den Schutz von Kulturgütern (1949). Das neue Gesetz zum Schutz von Kulturgütern (Bunkazai hogo-hô), das 1950 verkündet wurde und auch heute noch in Kraft ist, hob alle früheren Gesetze auf und führte in die Liste der geschützten Objekte zwei neue Kategorien ein: die „immateriellen Kulturgüter“ (mukei bunkazai) und die „verschütteten Kulturgüter“ (maizô bunkazai).

(deutsche Übersetzung durch die Redaktion)