The Hidden Traditions of the Tokyo National Museum

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THE HIDDEN TRADITIONS OF THE TOKYO NATIONAL MUSEUM

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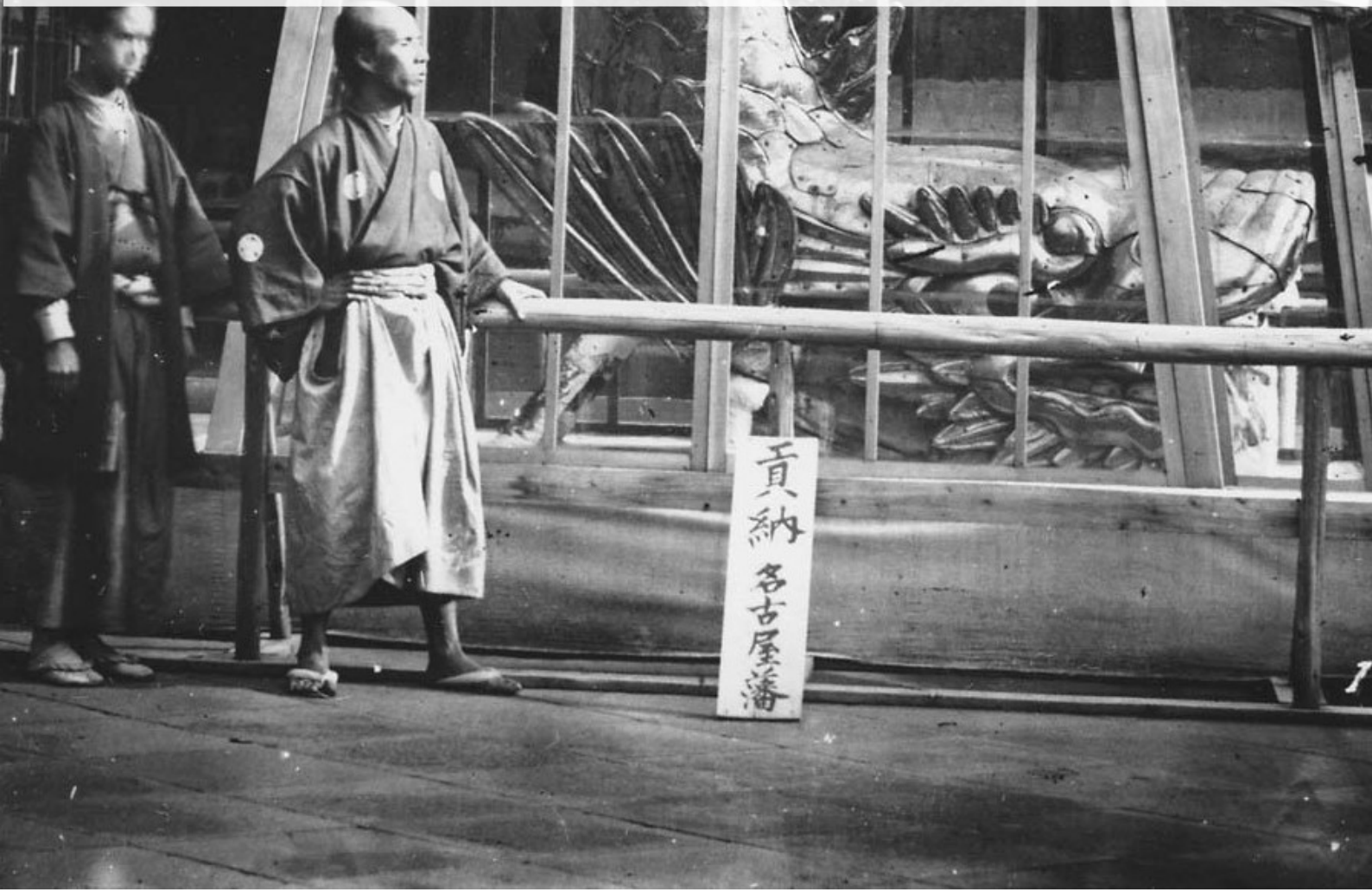

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Figure 1 – Picture taken in front of the golden s*hachi* roof ornament at the Yushima Seidō exposition in 1872. From the archives of the Tokyo National Museum.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Japan is often described as a country abundant with contradictions. While this statement glosses over many of Japan's nuanced cultural characteristics, it certainly applies to the wide variety of museums that can be found on the islands. Various institutions are famous for their innovative display and unique approach of modern art, such as the acclaimed Naoshima Benesse Art Site initiative. Other institutions are praised for their educational value and architectural brilliance, such as the award-winning Miraikan, also knowns as the National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation. Contrarily, some museums present antiquated information and dubious beliefs, most notably the highly debated and controversial Yūshūkan War Memorial Museum and Yasukuni Shrine, which are criticized for their revisionist narrative and enshrinement of known war criminals.

The Western concept of the museum was introduced in Japan during the 19th century, and has continued to develop and shape the museums of the country to this day. It is undeniable that the Western museum model has had considerable influence on early Japanese exhibition during the 19th century. However, the concept of exhibiting objects and exclusive display had already been practiced in the country long before the introduction of its Western interpretation. The way the Japanese experienced display was shaped by a multitude of customs and religious beliefs. An object would be presented in a particular way when displayed as part of a religious event or celebration, or when it was presented in the home or used during special occasions. Over time, display in Japan started relying more actively on Western standards of display, in order to liken itself to powerful colonizing countries, and to solidify its identity as a nation. The modern 21st century museum is now changing once again, developing new tools for education, research and preservation.

This thesis will take a closer look at the development of the concept of exhibition in Japan, with a focus on the development of the museum now known as the Tokyo National Museum. By examining the traditional and modern exhibition spaces, and the kind of display that occurred there, this thesis will attempt to trace the influence of the Western museum model on Japanese practices of exhibition and on Japanese institutions. Simultaneously, this thesis will explore aspects of display that have "retained" Japanese traditions, and are unique to the Japanese museum. Though much research on the topic of Japanese museums exists, most of it focusses on the presented subject, or displayed material culture. Here, instead, we will focus specifically on the methods of display and the exceptional cultural hybridity that occurs and has occurred within these practices. This observation will allow us to develop a closer understanding of the way the museum shapes cultural and national identities, and how this applies to communities outside of the often more thoroughly analyzed Western context. Simultaneously, this approach might allow us new insights and new angles from which we can examine other communities and cultures where this type of hybridity might exist. In a world where the Western museum is the norm, we tend to look at the museum as monolith, a consistent global institution. Yet, perhaps by better understanding culturally significant types of display, we can allow for more freedom of cultural expression within the museum, and reach a better understanding of its influential capabilities related to the formulation of national and international identities.

STATUS QUAESTIONIS

Over the past few decades, there have been several academic publications discussing the cultural and educational composition of the Japanese museum. However, these sources are few in comparison to similar research conducted concerning Western institutions. Still, the research published on Japanese museums offers a valuable insight in the inner workings of these institutions.

Earlier methods of Japanese public display are described in the article by Peter Francis Kornicki, "Public Display and Changing Values: Early Meiji Exhibitions and their Precursors". In this article, Kornicki observes the museum-like practices of premodern Japan, such as the expositions organized during the 17th and 18th centuries, and connects them to the way Japan presented itself at the world's fairs during the 19th century. The article by Angus Lockyer, "Japan at the Exhibition, 1867-1877: From Representation to Practice", focusses similarly on Japan's participation at the world's fairs. In this examination, Lokyer takes a closer look at the relationship between Japan and the Great Exhibitions, observes the way they prepared collections for their participation, and describes Japan subsequent domestic exhibitions inspired by these events. Additionally, as the Tokyo National Museum commemorated its 150th year of operation in 2022, new relevant primary sources from the archives of the museum have been digitized and made available to the public in celebration, which have been included in this research. Since the Tokyo National Museum finds its origin in the 1872 exposition at Yushima Seidō, these sources will provide more information on what the earlier museum exhibited, and its development through its 150 years of existence. Furthermore, the curatorial choices made in these publications will prove helpful in analyzing the contemporary presentation of the museum. These articles have proven useful for the identification of crucial traditional Japanese display practices, and for necessary observations made on the development of Japan's modern exposition methods.

Similar observations on Japan's internationally aimed collecting and exhibiting practices are described in Noriko Aso's book *Public Properties: Museums in Imperial Japan*, and Alice Yu-Ting Tseng's book *The Imperial Museum of Meiji Japan: Architecture and the Art of the Nation*. Both sources have

provided important insights in the trends toward the establishment of Japan's first museums during the late 19th century, and their development toward modern institutions. Kenji Yoshida's article "Tohaku" and "Minpaku" within the History of Modern Japanese Civilization: Museum Collections in Modern Japan" has provided complementary information on these observations, with a focus on the materiality of the early collections. Important publications on the development of the modern Japanese museum include Masaaki Morishita's book *The Empty Museum*, takes a closer look at the development of the modern art museum in Japan, and how these institutions have developed distinct national characteristics. Despite the fact that the focus of this thesis is on the Tokyo National Museum, which is technically not interpreted as an art museum, Morishita's book has provided substantial insight into the development of the modern incarnation of the Japanese museum.

The Japanese museum has sparked a considerable amount of discussion within the academic and intellectual community over the past few decades. A plethora of articles and publication describe the premodern and early modern exposition practices of Japan, observe the compelling connection between Japan's participation at the world's fairs of the 19th century, and describe the development of early and modern museums in Japan. However, academic observations on traditional Japanese display practices as a historical continuation that reaches well into the modern museum feel incomplete. And while connections between early public display and the modern museum are made somewhat more frequently, the relationship between private methods of display and contemporary expositions remains less well identified. By making these parallels more visible, this thesis hopes to inspire future research which might be able to make more comprehensive observations and connections regarding this topic.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Main research question

- How has the influence of the Western museum shaped the development of display in Japanese exhibition spaces, such as the Tokyo National Museum, and how have these practices retained their Japanese traditions?

Sub-questions

- How have the historical and cultural developments of the 19th century influenced early modern Japanese exhibitions, such as the Yushima Seidō Exhibition?
- What are the types of display Japan practiced before the introduction of the Western museum model?
- How did Western exhibiting techniques influence the development of the museum in Japan?
- What developmental shifts did the Japanese museum experience during the 19th and 20th century?
- What unique Japanese exhibiting practices can be traced in the Tokyo National Museum?
- How has the Tokyo National Museum utilized their narrative and exhibiting elements in order to develop a more culturally authentic museum?

METHOD DESCRIPTION

For this thesis, a combination of methodological approaches have been used. However, the research is predominantly based on literary and archival research, namely primary and secondary texts, as the current worldwide pandemic have made obtaining some research material somewhat difficult. Unfortunately, a personal visit to the institutions included in this study have not been possible due to this situation. Most information on the relevant museums has instead been gathered predominantly through digital archives.

To answer first sub-question, an brief overview of Japanese history leading up to the Meiji Restoration will be covered in chapter two. Though some of its nuance will be lost due to the short length of this thesis, this account of events will shed light on the subsequent motivations behind the exhibition practices which will follow. Following that, we will take a closer look at the earliest incarnation of the Western museum as adopted by Japanese society, the Yushima Seidō Exhibition in 1872.

In the third chapter this thesis will examine significant examples of display in traditional Japanese culture. These observations connect to the second sub-question, and will prove useful in understanding the history of Japanese display methods. These examples will provide a theoretical framework which aid in analyzing the historical and recent developments within the Tokyo National Museum. Examining several examples of relevant premodern exposition practices will allow us to connect these to more modern patterns of display later in the thesis, where we will explore the musealization of these customs.

The fourth chapter will trace the development of the Tokyo National Museum from the Yushima Seidō exhibit to its contemporary structure. This will provide crucial insight regarding the influence of Westernization on the development of the museum and its exhibiting practices. In order to answer the third sub-question, we will observe which aspects of Western culture were

incorporated in Japanese society and the Japanese museum, and which aspects remained closer to their traditional Japanese values.

The fifth chapter will take a closer look at the current incarnation of the Tokyo National Museum and some of the most recent developments within the institution. By connecting their current exhibits to the earlier observed traditional and historical examples of display, we can answer the fifth sub-question. A rather speculative approach and analyzation of the newest exhibits in the museum will explore possible answers to the sixth and final sub-question of this thesis.

EXPECTED RESULTS

By comparing Western and Japanese sources on the Japanese museum, this thesis aims to present a better understanding of significant cultural differences between methods of display in the West and Japan. Traditional Japanese display practices have shaped even the most Western-inspired presentations in Japanese museums, and have thus retained their Japanese cultural identity in some way. Additionally, by observing various examples of Japanese customs and beliefs, this thesis will reveal some of the unique qualities of the Tokyo National Museum, while exploring the hybridity and modernity of the museum's more modern presentations. By uncovering the concealed aspects of the Japanese museum and the benefits of the freedom of unique cultural expression, this thesis will contribute to the discussion related to the very concept of the museum itself. Despite the limitations imparted on this research, due to current events, available resources, and the short length of this paper, this thesis will challenge the Western museum model as the norm, in order to inspire more cultural experimentation and exploration around the world.

CHAPTER 2

THE MEIJI PERIOD AND THE YUSHIMA SEIDŌ EXPOSITION

As mentioned in the introduction, the Tokyo National Museum is considered to be the oldest Japanese museum, as it traces its origins back to the Yushima Seidō exhibit of 1872, during the Meiji period. The Meiji period, which lasted from 1868 to 1912, was an innovative era which saw rise to a modern Japan through rapid Westernization and modernization. It is no coincidence that the inception of the Tokyo National Museum, the introduction of museums as a concept, and the invention of the Japanese word for "art", all find their origins amongst the tumultuous innovations of the Meiji Period.[1] In order to fully understand the historical context behind these ground-breaking developments, however, a closer examination of the events leading up to the Meiji reformation, as well as brief look at the political and cultural developments during the era, is appropriate. This chapter will summarize the major historical events leading up to and taking place during the Meiji period, and will examine how these events contributed to the formation of the first Japanese museum. Additionally, this chapter will take a closer look at the evolution of Japanese cultural expression and the shaping of its identity in the context of the (geo)political environment of the Meiji period, as well as the Japanese and Western response to these newly presented ideas.

[1] Alice Yu-Ting Tseng, *The Imperial Museums of Meiji Japan: Architecture and the Art of the Nation* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2008), 19.

JAPAN BEFORE THE MEIJI REFORMATION

Before the beginning of the Meiji period in 1868, Japan had existed as a feudal society under the rule of a military government known as the shogunate, or *bakufu* 幕府, for hundreds of years.

Historically, the ruling emperor of Japan and appointed regents from aristocratic families held the power of government. However, the political power was seized by the Minamoto clan after the Genpei War near the end of the 12th century.[2] This national civil war was the culmination of the persistent rivalry between the Taira and Minamoto clans, who even before the war had often clashed in their efforts to influence the imperial court. The war lasted from 1180 to 1185, and the victorious Minamoto clan seized the political power, leaving the emperor and the imperial court to rule as figureheads. Their rule came to be known as the Kamakura *bakufu* as a result of the Minamoto clan establishing a military government in the city of Kamakura in 1192. This form of military government would be continued by the various clans through various violent struggles for power, until the Tokugawa clan ultimately unified the country in 1603.[3] The Tokugawa *bakufu* became the new unchallenged rulers of the military government and moved their seat of power to the city of Edo, now known as Tokyo, from where their centralized feudal administration ruled the country. As they were wary of another conflict plunging the country into war yet again, the *bakufu* introduced laws restricting foreign contact, censored various (political) topics, and enforced stricter rules on the social order and class system. The *sankinkōtai* 参勤交代 system was established to ensure centralized control over the feudal lords, or *daimyo* 大名, of the various domains. The *daimyō* were obliged to serve alternate years in the capital and in their respective domains, leaving

[2] Tarō Sakamoto, *Japanese History* (Tokyo: International Society for Educational Information Press, 1971), 45-47.

[3] Imperial rule was briefly reinstated during the Kenmu Restoration (1333-1336). However, this brief period is the only exception to this otherwise continuous era of military rule, during which the emperor was but a ceremonial and religious figurehead. Sakamoto, *Japanese History*, 51-54.

behind their families permanently in Edo.[4] This political and cultural shift caused a rapid urbanization of Edo and other large settlements, such as Osaka and Kyoto, which each developed an unique urban culture, captive consumer market, and a commercial entertainment industry. Travel, and even tourism, was made possible by safe roads and travel stations. The flourishing print industry, despite being subject to the *bakufu*'s censorship laws, allowed information to be exchanged through printed books and images.[5] Japan would continue to develop its national culture suspended in this state of affairs until the fall of the *bakufu* in 1867. This era in Japanese history is known as the Edo or Tokugawa period, which to avoid confusion will be referred to as the Edo period.

During the early Edo period the Tokugawa *bakufu* had introduced a set of laws regulating Japan's connection with the outside world. These laws were primarily the result of growing unrest caused by contact with foreign countries, such as a rise in Christianity in Japan as a result of overseas trade with the Portuguese. Peace had only just returned to the Japan after a long period of political unrest and several civil wars, an age known as the *sengoku jidai* 戦国時代 or Warring States Era, and the Tokugawa *bakufu* was keen on defending this peace and solidifying their seat of power.[6] These laws, collectively known as *sakoku* 鎖国 or 'closed country', effectively started a long period of self-isolation, during which the *bakufu* only sanctioned the formal relationship between Japan and four other countries: China, Korea, the kingdom of Kyushu, and Holland. Private business deals with Chinese merchants who traded at the harbor of Nagasaki were allowed, but the *bakufu* maintained no formal diplomatic relations with the Chinese Ming and Ch'ing dynasties. Such an alliance did exist

[4] Sakamoto, *Japanese History*, 74-78.
[5] Noriko Aso, *Public Properties: Museums in Imperial Japan* (London: Duke University Press, 2014), 18-19.
[6] The Warring States Era started with a devastating civil war known as the Ōnin Civil War in 1467, during which the feudal system under power of the then ruling Ashikaga *bakufu* collapsed. The unstable and chaotic era of near constant battles that followed lasted for over a hundred years, although some debate exists on its exact end date. It is widely accepted, however, that the end of the war and the following era of peace was the result of the unification of Japan by Tokugawa Ieyasu, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, and Oda Nobunaga, who are also known as the Three Great Unifiers of Japan. Sakamoto, *Japanese History*, 55-56.

between Japan and the Korean Yi dynasty, as Korea would send a special envoy whenever a new *shogun* took office, to maintain their diplomatic coalition and to exchange credentials with the new government. A less equal bond existed between Japan and the Ryukyu kingdom, which was a vassal state of both Japan and China simultaneously. They maintained diplomatic relations with the *bakufu* in much the same way as Korea, albeit a strongly vertical one, which placed the shogunate in a position of power. Holland was the only European nation with which Japan maintained relations during the Edo period, but their connection was limited to private trade. Only a few Dutch traders at a time were allowed to reside in Japan, but they were secluded to the artificial island of Deshima in the bay of Nagasaki, where they were kept under strict supervision.[7] However, the chief of the trading post, or *Opperhoofd*, was required to travel to Edo to pay an homage to the *bakufu* and to renew the trade agreements. During this long trek to the capital, known as the *Hofreis*, the Dutch delegation saw more of Japan than most other countries during *sakoku*. Still, Dutch trading vessels were forbidden from visiting elsewhere, and other countries were barred from visiting Japan altogether. Anyone arriving on Japanese shores without permission would be imprisoned or executed, and Japanese citizens leaving the country without official authorization would be unable to return. By implementing these strict decrees, the Tokugawa *bakufu* made sure Japan was never placed in a position of inferiority in its dealings with other nations, and only maintained a relationship on equal footing with Korea.[8]

This long period of self-induced isolation had the desired effect of strengthening and stabilizing the *bakufu*'s control over Japan, but also created a proverbial bubble in which Japan was no longer exposed to the developments and progress made in the rest of the world. As a result, Japan was particularly unaware of the state of the rest of the world, while the government faced a growing anxiety toward foreign influences and the threat of colonization by Western powers. These

[7] Sakamoto, *Japanese History*, 79.
[8] Tashiro Kazui and Susan Downing Videen, "Foreign Relations during the Edo Period: Sakoku Re-examined," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 8, no. 2 (1982): 288-289.

tensions culminated in the arrival of the American Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry (1794-1858) and his fleet. Commodore Perry entered the Japanese Uraga harbor in 1853 with a fleet of 'Black Ships', which consisted of heavily armed warships that showed off the military might of the West in an act of Gunboat Diplomacy.[9] Commodore Perry demanded Japan to open its ports for American vessels with a threat of violence, a request to which the *bakufu* had no other option than to comply. The Treaty of Friendship between Japan and the United States, also known as the Convention of Kanagawa, was signed in 1854. When the United States pressed the *bakufu* for an additional trade treaty, however, the imperial court protested to such an agreement and refused negotiations. Nevertheless, the *bakufu* minister Ii Naosuke (1815-1860) concluded the United States-Japan Commercial Treaty without the court's consent, which was signed in the year 1858. The treaty was an unequal one, opening various cities along the Japanese coast for trade, permitting American ministers and consuls to be stationed in Japanese territory, and allowing American citizens residence.[10] In the years that followed, similar treaties were signed between Japan and Russia, France and Holland, effectively ending the seclusion of Japan after more than 220 years of *sakoku*. This era after the arrival of Commodore Perry is also known as the *bakumatsu* 幕末 (1853-1867), which signifies the turbulent final years of the Edo period and the end of the shogunate rule.

Due to the unequal nature of these various treaties, anti-foreign sentiments were prevalent among the Japanese civilians. Additionally, the fact that the instigating treaty had been blatantly signed without imperial consent saw a renewed rise in resentment aimed at the *bakufu*.[11] Ultimately, Ii Naosuke was assassinated in 1860 by an organized group of young *samurai* loyalists, after which the *bakufu* attempted to stabilize their seat of power by working together more closely

[9] The name 'Black Ships' was an Edo period term for all foreign vessels entering Japan during their period of isolation. 'Gunboat Diplomacy' refers to the practice of motivating foreign policy objectives with implied threats of warfare through the display of naval power. This practice was common during the 19th century period of imperialism.
[10] Sakamoto, *Japanese History*, 84.
[11] Ibid.

with the Imperial court in Kyoto.[12] Nevertheless, the Japanese economy continued to deteriorate due to poorly regulated foreign trading, and negative feelings toward the *bakufu* and foreigners grew more intense over time. As a result of the rising tensions and growing political unrest, Tokugawa Yoshinobu presented a petition to restore power to the emperor to the Imperial Court in 1867.[13]

The court approved Yoshinobu's petition, and on January 3, 1868, the Meiji Restoration was put into place, returning the power over national administration to the Imperial Court after a period of almost 700 years of shogunate rule. The emperor moved his court from Kyoto to Edo, which was renamed to Tokyo, where over the following years a new and centralized government was established. Most modern history books tend to gloss over the less peaceful events of the beginning of the Meiji period, such as the Boshin War (1868-1869) and the Satsuma Rebellion (1877), both proving that not all were keen on these changes and direction the country was taking. Japan was, indeed, changing drastically during these early years of the new era. The feudal system and ruling clans were abolished, and Japan was divided into prefectures, each administered by an administrator appointed by the government. Additionally, the feudal class system was abolished, removing the hereditary distinction between merchants, artisans, farmers, *samurai* and nobles. Following the Western example of individual autonomy, civilians gained the rights to freedom of occupation, marriage, residence, and property possession. With these changes, Japan was about to enter a completely new age.[14]

[12] Ibid., 85.
Jintarō Fujii, *Outline of Japanese History in the Meiji Era*, trans. Hattie Colton and Kenneth Colton (Tokyo: Ōbunsha, 1958), 18.
[13] Tokugawa Yoshinobu, also known as Tokugawa Keiki, was the 15th and last Shogun ruling the Tokugawa *bakufu*. Sakamoto, *Japanese History*, 86.
[14] Fujii, *Japanese History in the Meiji Era*, 24-26 and 36-39

JAPAN AND THE WEST

As the new government developed and modernized its systems during the early years of the Meiji period, the policy toward foreign nations shifted and became predominantly positive. Japan was to open its borders, and the Japanese emperor would grant audience to foreign ministers in order to promote friendly relations with other nations. Many of the modern innovations now emblematic for the Meiji era were made possible by the introduction of foreign systems and technology, such as the construction of railways, and the introduction of telephony, telegraphy, and a modern postal system.

In 1871, the government organized a diplomatic voyage known as the Iwakura Embassy, also called the Iwakura mission, led by the high-ranking government official Tomomi Iwakura (1825-1883). The mission's main objectives were to visit Europe and the United States in order to gain recognition for the newly reinstated Imperial rule, and to rectify the unequal peace and trade treaties which were established under military and political pressure during the *bakumatsu*. Ultimately, the delegation had little success negotiating better terms, and instead was stunned by the innovation, strength and wealth on display during their visit. This escalated the already existing sentiment that Japan had to modernize in order to be considered equals with these great and powerful nations. As per the world view Japan had developed during these years, the only way to modernize was to Westernize.

During the years of *sakoku*, foreign inventions and ideas had entered Japan only through the port of Nagasaki, and were often studied as part of the field known as *rangaku* 蘭学, or Dutch studies. As these topics were under strict surveillance of the government and authorities, their development in Japan had been stagnant, and were generally seen more as a novelty rather than a legitimate vehicle for progress. However, under the pressure of Japan's precarious geopolitical position during the 19th century, as well as the developments mentioned earlier, this attitude

changed drastically. The country was surrounded by powerful imperial powers, such as Russia and Great Britain, which posed a significant threat to Japan's security and sovereignty. With the country's inner workings laid bare for the rest of the world to see, and the lingering fear of colonization by Western powers, Japan scrambled to uphold its status and autonomy. Thus began a period of rapid change and growth, during which the Japanese government intended to strengthen their country by modernizing their political, economic and military systems to defend against external threats and assert Japan's status as a major power. Additionally, the government officials and the upper classes aspired to improve Japan's international reputation through the adoption of Western policies, ideas, customs and Western fashion. For example, the emperor, who himself started wearing Western attire during the early Meiji period, issued a mandate in 1871 offering government officials to wear Western suits. [15]

This approach to Westernization caused marked transformation in every aspect of Japanese society, which saw the daily lives and surroundings of Japanese citizens completely changed within just a few decades. Not only did the rapid modernization profoundly and fundamentally change the economy and industry of Japan, the popularization of western-style dress and formal wear and the construction of buildings in new western-inspired architectural styles, along with the visible implementation of new technology such as clocks and streetlamps, thoroughly transformed the streetscape of the larger Japanese cities. The fact that these various facets of westernization during the Meiji period were interpreted as a beneficial development can be gathered from the fact that they are collectively known as *bunmei kaika* 文明開化 – meaning "civilization and enlightenment".[16]

Although the new attitude towards the introduction of American and European culture was predominantly positive, the incredible momentum of the transformation also sparked feelings of anxiety; a fear of losing the essence of Japanese tradition and culture. In a way, Japan was effectively

[15] Susan Hanley, *Everyday Things in Premodern Japan: the Hidden Legacy of Material Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 167-168.
[16] Fujii, *Japanese History in the Meiji Era*, 1-2.

colonizing itself. This motivated the government and various cultural groups to establish a new place for tradition and history which would befit the "new" Japanese nation.

DEFINING "JAPAN"

While Japan underwent an astounding transformation through rapid westernization and modernization, there also developed a trend of recontextualizing Japanese history and tradition. This development can broadly be observed as being motivated by two general incentives. First, the Japanese government hoped to secure amendment of the unequal treaties by adopting a Western front. This also meant they had to reinvent Japanese identity, culture, and history, effectively constructing a new transnational self-image with which Japan sought to appeal to foreigners. This posed an interesting predicament for Meiji historians, who were tasked with selecting which aspects of Japanese history were to be a focal point of their collective narrative. Japan was still in a dangerously vulnerable position during the early Meiji period, and was eager to prove itself worthy and secure their autonomy. Their presented image had to clearly demonstrate the fact that they were, in fact, their own people with a rich history, a unique culture, and a strong sense of national identity. A nation capable and modern enough to avoid colonization, but different enough to be their own nation with a distinctive identity. Secondly, the 1880s saw a rise in appreciation and general spread of Japanese traditions and material culture in everyday life, a movement which was fueled by the nostalgic sentiments made even stronger by the ever increasing pace of changes made to everyday life.[17] As a result, a newfound admiration for historical traditions, customs, and traditional fashion developed alongside the dynamic cultural landscape of the Meiji era, blending Japan's centuries old cultural heritage and recent modern advancements together. This development was, however, not just the result of the outside forces of Westernization rapidly changing Japan, but was also motivated by changes from within. A general trend in connection with

[17] Sakamoto, *Japanese History*, 102.

studies of the Meiji period is the almost exclusive focus on the era's innovations, Westernizations, "borrowed" systems, and "modern" developments. However, this angle severely downplays the continuity of Japanese material culture and the Japanese way of living as it persisted throughout the Meiji Reformation. Many of the changes experienced during the Meiji period are, in fact, the result of a more widespread diffusion of material goods and a more public access to culture and leisure following the abolishment of the class system and technological advances of the era. For example, although the spectacular Western-style buildings constructed in Tokyo and other cities are often considered as the characteristic style for the Meiji period, the typical urban house was still very traditional in its design, and followed the design principles of the middle- and lower-class *samurai* dwellings of the Edo period. Many of the wealthy city dwellers now had access to styles that were previously unavailable to them, as did the Meiji era's white collar workers, bureaucrats, and salaried workers – many of which were former *samurai* – who all desired housing which could perform both the part of a proper status symbol, and a space which could be used for receiving and entertaining guests. These traditional houses both incorporated the display of art and the practice of Japanese traditions, both of which predate the innovations of the Meiji Era. [18]

An interesting phenomenon, which was the result of the various developments just described, was the recognition of Japanese traditional craftmanship and artistry as "art". Following Western examples of art appreciation, numerous Japanese traditions pertaining material cultural heritage, intangible cultural heritage, decorative arts, and performative arts came to be appreciated in a different light, and were recontextualized to better fit the Western definition of art. Additionally, new words were added to the Japanese language to represent this change in attitude, such as *bijutsu*, meaning fine art, and *mingu*, a catch-all term for everyday articles which came to be regarded as folk art.[19] This development can be traced back to the special exposition organized by

[18] Hanley, *Everyday Things in Premodern Japan*, 156-159.
[19] The term *mingu* was first officially used in 1921 by Keizō Shibusawa (1896-1963) during the creation of his museum, the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka. Though this is much later, it still accurately reflects the

the government in 1872, the Yushima Seidō *hakurankai*, which presented familiar and unfamiliar Japanese objects in a new and distinct way, effectively recontextualizing their place in society. This historical exposition, its connection to the Japanese exhibit at the Vienna *Weltausstellung*, and the national museum that was created in the years that followed, are part of the main focus of this paper due to their central role in the development of Japan's modern culture, as these venues are crucial examples of Japan actively creating, staging, and performing their own national identity. Each of these representations were uniquely shaped by their respective purposes and underlying political intentions, while being affected by prevailing Western practices, making especially the *Weltausstellung* a "contact zone". Therefore, examining these representations of Japan during the Meiji period might result a better understanding of the construction of self-imagery through exposition practices.

THE YUSHIMA SEIDŌ HAKURANKAI

During their diplomatic mission, the members of the beforementioned Iwakura Embassy visited various museums and other related institutions during their travels through Europe and the United States. The group was not just impressed by the imposing collections on display, but especially by the methods and systems by which Western museums exhibited and interpreted their objects. The emphasis on scientific classification, and the use of chronological and historical frameworks to organize and display objects, made a considerable impact on the development of the Japanese museum, as this approach contrasted with the traditional Japanese method of displaying objects, which tended to focus more on aesthetic, ownership and symbolic qualities.[20] One of the member of the Iwakura Embassy was the Japanese philosopher Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835-1901), who joined the

changing attitude of Japan toward their own material heritage. Kenji Yoshida, "Tohaku" and "Minpaku" within the History of the Modern Japanese Civilization: Museum Collections in Modern Japan," *Senri Ethnological Studies* 54 (2001): 91.

[20] Peter Kornicki. "Public Display and Changing Values: Early Meiji Exhibitions and Their Precursors" *Monumenta Nipponica* 49, no. 2 (1994): 186, 194-195.

mission as a translator. His book *Seiyō Jijō* 西洋事情, *Conditions of the West*, was one if the earliest publications describing exhibitions overseas, as it was published in 1866.[21] This encyclopaedic overview of the Western concepts, practices, and institutions encountered by the Iwakura Embassy, conveyed these overseas experiences to the Japanese public consciousness through the general reading audience. In his book and various published articles, Fukuzawa used the term *hakubutsukan* 博物館 to refer to museum and similar institutions, and the term *hakurankai* 博覧会 to describe a wide variety of exhibitions. Fukuzawa's influence on the adoption and standardization of the term *hakubutsukan* in the modern Japanese language is now widely recognized.[22]

In 1872, the newly established Exhibition Bureau, the *hakurankai jimukyoku* 博覧会事務局, founded under the Grand Council of State, the *Dajōkan* 太政官, organized a special exposition (Fig. 3). This event was held on the grounds of the Yushima Seidō temple, a Confucian temple in the Bunkyo ward of Tokyo. This event, albeit inspired by the international expositions of the West, was clearly a continuation of the exhibits often organized during the Edo period, such as *bussankai* 物産会 and *kaichō* 開帳. These older expositions and their methods of display will be examined in more detail in the next chapter, in which we will take a closer look at the history of traditional exhibition in Japan. Although the exposition at Yushima Seidō could be considered a direct continuation of these practices, various influences from Western institutions, such as the ones observed by the Iwakura mission, had fundamentally transformed both the methods of approach and the methods for display utilized at the exposition. These innovations were visible in the implementation of a more Western approach to categorization and classification, and the overabundant use of glass display cases for the presentation of objects and specimens, reminiscent of the presentation at the British Museum and the Great Exhibition in London. The name used for the exposition's title, *hakurankai*, also

[21] Ibid., 170.
[22] Aso, *Public Properties*, 15.

signifies a shift in approach in comparison to the Edo period *bussankai*. Both the term *hakurankai*, exposition, and the term *hakubutsukan*, museum, start with the Chinese character *haku* 博, meaning 'to disseminate', although the further combination of characters augment the meaning somewhat. It is worthy to note the implementation of the same characters Fukuzawa used to denote these type of occasions in the West, as the characters *hakuran* 博覧, meaning 'to be widely read or experienced', clearly emphasizes the experience of the visitor rather than the objects viewed. This, compared to the meaning of the earlier use of the characters *bussan* 物産, meaning simply 'product', can be interpreted as an effort to emphasize the educational nature of this new type of exposition, as well as an attempt to liken itself of the grand exhibitions of the West.[23] Additionally, this was the first time the new term *hakurankai* was used for a government sponsored exhibition.[24] The Japanese word for museum was further canonized by the government in the years that followed. The Museum Bureau, or *hakubutsukyoku* 博物局, and the Museum, *hakubutsukan*, were both founded under the Education Ministry in 1871 and 1872 respectively, but did not host a permanent and publicly accessible collection. The two institutions were merged with the Exhibition Bureau for a short period between March 1873 and February 1875, and became the Yamashita Museum, which once again utilized the term *hakubutsukan*, but organized only two exhibitions in 1873 and 1874. As a result of governmental reorganization, the Yamashita Museum was ultimately split into two separate institutions; one under the authority of the Education Ministry and one under the Home Ministry. The Exhibition Bureau was placed under the authority of the Home Ministry of Japan and changed its name to *hakubutsukan* in 1875.[25]

[23] Kornicki. "Public Display and Changing Values", 169.
[24] Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art, *The Dream of a Museum* (Kobe: The Kobe Shinbun and the Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art, 2002), 18.
[25] Tseng, *Imperial Museums*, 42.

The collection of the Yushima Seidō exposition and the remarkable way these items were obtained are worth mentioning here as well. A wide variety of objects and specimens was gathered specifically for the purpose of the event, and the way this was achieved in itself already presents an interesting look into the transformation of the Japanese national identity and the development of a truly Japanese museum. As it was, Japan possessed no readily available royal or secular collections to exhibit, at least not in the same way the Western world did. Therefore the organizers of the exposition had made a nationwide appeal for items to be presented at the *hakurankai*. From the large amount of submissions, the final collection was carefully selected and curated. The resulting collection consisted of about 600 items, which included a wide variety of minerals, taxidermy, various artworks, objects belonging the Imperial family, and antique cultural assets.[26] These items were displayed in glass cases and special cabinets lining the Taiseiden Hall of the Temple, and Japanese paintings and woodblock prints were presented in wooden frames, invoking the air of a Western museum (Fig. 2). An impressive centerpiece of the exposition was a large golden *shachi*, a traditional roof ornament shaped like a mythical fish designed to ward off fire and evil, which originally decorated the canopy of Nagoya castle (Fig. 1). This female *shachi*, placed in a large, uniquely shaped glass display case, acted as a sort of mascot for the exposition, as it is often depicted in woodblock prints and antique photos documenting the exposition. As the Japanese government was planning on participating in the international *Weltausstellung*, which was to be held in Vienna the following year, much of the exhibits for the *hakurankai* were collected with the intention of sending them abroad for the Exposition. If possible, two examples of each specimen or object was collected; one to send abroad, and one to remain in the collection in Japan. The Yushima Seidō *hakurankai* itself was a tremendous success domestically. The exhibition opened on the 10th of

[26] The large amount of antiquities present in the *hakurankai* collection was most likely due to the growing interest in the preservation of Japanese material heritage, in the wake of a concerning amount of heritage being lost due to the rise of the anti-Buddhist movement following the Meiji Restoration, which saw a large amount of cultural heritage being destroyed, combined with a shocking amount of regulated and unregulated export of antiques to the West. This topic is examined in more detail in chapter 4, where we talk about the Jinshin Survey and its effects. Yoshida, "Tohaku" and "Minpaku," 80.

March in 1872, and would be open to the public from 9 AM to 4 PM. The event was scheduled to last 20 days, but proved to be more popular than previously anticipated. Due to the large amount of visitors, admissions to the exhibition had to be restricted, and the event itself was extended for another 10 days, until the 30th of April. The Yushima Seidō *hakurankai* attracted 150,000 visitors in total.[27]

When the objects intended for the *Weltausstellung* were sent to Vienna and the official exhibit was closed, the collection remained on the temple grounds and was opened for the public on days ending in 1 or 6. This makes the *hakurankai* the first permanent museum, or *hakubutsukan*, and the first official incarnation of the Tokyo National Museum.[28] Both during the *hakurankai* itself, and the following permanent exhibit, the methods of presentation utilized had significant impact on the way Japanese material culture was recontextualized during the decades that followed. The exhibit employed a more western approach of categorization, and presented the objects in impressive glass cases, evidently inspired by previous Great Exhibitions and the museums described by the members of the Iwakura mission. The presentation of familiar and unfamiliar Japanese objects in the authoritative air of the temple grounds combined by western methods of exposition must have had great impact on the visitors of the *hakurankai*.

[27] "History of the TNM: Yushima Seidō Exposition," Tokyo National Museum, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_free_page/index.php?id=144.
[28] Yoshida, "Tohaku" and "Minpaku," 80 -81

Figure 2 – Wooblock triptych depicting the exposition at Yushima Seidō by Ikkei Shōsai. From the collection of the Waseda University Library.

Figure 3 – The organizers of the Yushima Seidō exhibition seated in front of the golden *shachi*, 1872, photograph taken by Yokoyama Matsusaburō.

JAPANESE PARTICIPATION AT THE INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITIONS

The end of the Edo period and subsequent opening of Japan was, in fact, well timed for Japan to participate and represent itself in the Great Exhibitions, which were becoming increasingly popular during the second half of the 19th century. The specially curated selection of objects at the Yushima Seidō exhibition were collected for this very purpose, as the Japanese government intended to influence the way the Japanese nation was displayed to the rest of the world during the Vienna *Weltaussstellung* of 1873. This was, however, not the first time Japan was represented at one of the international fairs. The first of these international exhibitions, the London's Great Exhibition held at the Crystal Palace in 1851, came well before the end of the *sakoku* regulations. Japan did not yet concern itself with the western world, and the *bakufu* had sent no objects to be displayed. A few Japanese folding screens and pieces of furniture, most likely acquired through trade between Britain and Chinese merchants, were exhibited at the 'Chinese Court' of the Exhibition. The first British minister to Japan, Sir John Rutherford Alcock (1809-1897), made an effort to have the nation more comprehensively included in the London International Exhibition of 1862. He invited the *bakufu* to participate in the fair, but was unsuccessful in his endeavor. He did manage to have the country represented in a separate 'Japanese Court', which consisted of items from his personal collection. Japan officially took part in the international exhibitions for the first time when they participated in the *Exposition Universelle* of Paris in 1867, twice. Both the *bakufu* and the Satsuma domain were present at the event to represent Japan, much to the embarrassment of the *bakufu* representatives.[29]

However, Japan did not have full authority in deciding what was to be exhibited at the exposition. The already carefully curated selection of objects gathered for the Yushima Seidō exposition was considered once again before being send to Vienna, and a more compact selection was made. This resulting cull was selected with the international audience that would visit the fair in

[29] Kornicki. "Public Display and Changing Values", 169.

mind, but was also the result of logistical limitations. The presented objects which were to participate at the Vienna fair were curated one final time by Gottfried Wagener, a German who had been employed by the government to select the exhibits for the Vienna International Exhibition. Due to his personal interest, an emphasis on craft objects was favored over the other collections presented by the Japanese government.[30] Examples of these include a large papier-mâché replica of the Great Buddha statue of Kamakura, and a large collection of lacquerware, textiles and ceramics. Once again, the impressive golden *shachi* was part of the exhibit, and the center of much attention (Fig. 4). Separate from the Japanese pavilion was a recreation of a Japanese traditional garden, with a teahouse, a shrine, and a model of the Yanaka Tennōji temple pagoda.[31]

It is important to be aware of the performative nature of the Great Exhibitions of the 19th century when observing Japan's participation from a cultural standpoint, as not just Japan, but every nation in attendance was performing their identity. Still, these grand fairs were far more than an extravagant display for nations to present their cultural heritage to an international audience. They were part of an interconnected and nuanced framework where each nation's portrayal was steeped in bureaucratic and economical intent, and the commodification of culture. The exhibitions served as a stage for the display of power for the nationalist and colonialist attitude of 19th century Europe. People and cultural objects were often transformed into commodities by being displayed commercially in the context of the expositions. And although these commodities were not for sale, the opportunity to view them could be bought. The exhibits also focused on the advent of material culture and consumerism, as a great deal of exhibits displayed at the Great Exhibitions were manufactured articles in search of foreign markets, exhibited for their value or their advertising potential. The fact that the above described characteristics of the international exhibitions were not lost on the Meiji government, becomes evident from the expenditures they had made on their

[30] Yoshida, "Tohaku" and "Minpaku," 81
[31] "History of the TNM: The World's Fair in Vienna: The Origin of the Japanese Modern Museum," Tokyo National Museum, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_free_page/index.php?id=145.

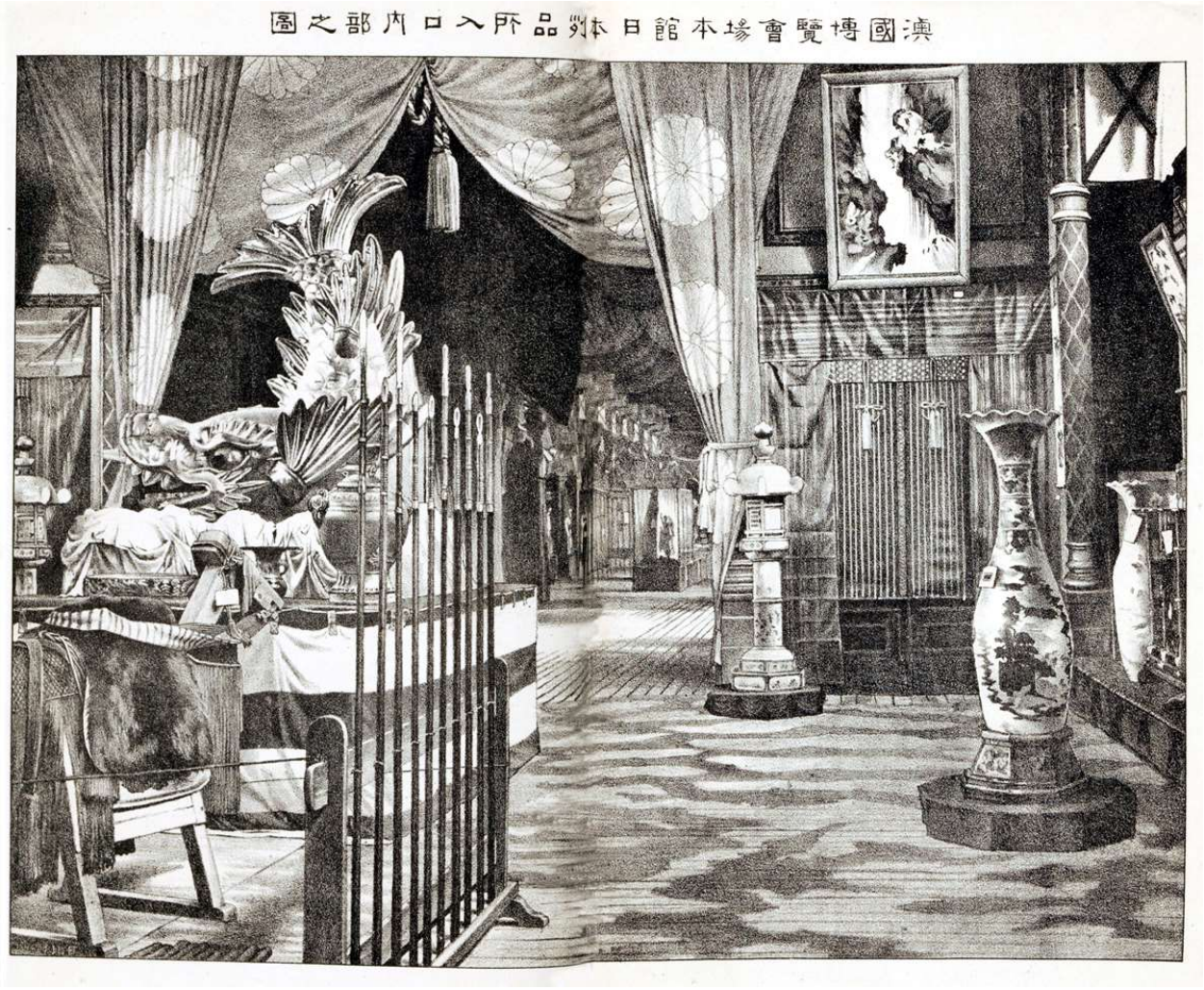

Figure 4 – Illustration depicting the entrance of the Japanese Pavilion at at the Vienna *Weldausstellung* of 1873. From the report of Tsunetami Sano. The golden *shachi* is once again prominently displayed.

participation, and the types of objects Japan had supplied to be displayed. Through their performance at the world fair, Japan demonstrated its acceptance for Western rules for the behavior of nations, and tried to highlight various products produced in their brand new factories in order to encourage the growth of their new enterprises. However, the emphasis on traditionally crafted objects and delicately created industrial art products resulting from the selection made by Wagener resulted in a presentation of Japanese goods, which differed from the demonstration of machinery products intended by the government. Additionally, the exotic view the public expected of the newly opened but still mysterious Japan sparked a vogue of interest in the country and its visual presentation, which can be observed in the rise of *Japonisme*. The term *Japonisme* refers to the influence of Japanese visual art and material culture on Western European artists, and by extension Western popular culture. This movement gained significantly more momentum during the second half of the 19th century, after the opening of Japan. The reputation of *Japonisme* might have influenced the curatorial choices made by Wagener. In turn, the presentation of Japanese objects at the Vienna exposition might have further influenced the escalation of the movements popularity and the subsequent demand for Japanese traditional goods. In the end, the selected objects presented at the *Weltausstellung* did have an effect on the export of Japanese produced goods, though perhaps not in the way the Japanese government had intended.

The Vienna World Exposition lasted for six months, from May 1st to November 2nd, and attracted over 7,225,000 visitors. It is difficult to estimate how many of these spectators specifically visited the Japanese pavilion. However, we can gather the Japanese exhibit was quite popular from the fact that items available for purchase sold extremely fast, as thousands of Japanese fans sold out in just a week.[32] Japanese culture was gathering much popularity in the west, and the popularity of *Japonisme* was spreading fast. Not only did Japan's participation at the World Fair influence their transnational identity as produced by the Western world, it also greatly influenced the further

[32] "Expositions Held in and before 1900: Vienna International Exposition and Japonism," National Diet Library Japan, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.ndl.go.jp/exposition/e/s1/1873-2.html.

development of the Meiji period. The government had send 24 engineers with the delegation to study the newest developments of Western technology for use in the expanding Japanese industry. One of the government officials who travelled to Vienna as part of the Japanese delegation, Tsunetami Sano (1822-1902), was incredibly impressed by the powerful effect the *Weltausstellung* imparted on its audience. After returning to Japan he compiled an extensive 96 volume report on the Fair which he submitted to the government in 1875. In addition to a detailed description of the Fair and its diverse beneficial effects, Sano wrote reports together with Wagener which pleaded for the creation of a modern museum following Western principles in the Japanese capital. In response, the government started organizing the National Industrial Exhibitions, and ultimately the institution which is now known as the Tokyo National Museum.[33]

[33] Tokyo National Museum, "The World's Fair in Vienna."

CHAPTER 3

THE EARLY "MUSEUM" – EXHIBITION IN PRE-MEIJI JAPAN

Although the modern concept of the museum did not emerge until the Meiji period, Japan already maintained a rich tradition of collecting, preserving, and displaying art and relics. These early examples of the preservation and display of cultural heritage are frequently connected to the multitude of temples and shrines which can be found across Japan. Other museum-like qualities can be traced in events which were not necessarily connected to religious institutions, but occurred in various types of public spaces, or in the home and other private settings. This chapter will examine the history of exposition in pre-Meiji Japanese cultural practice, and explore the connection between these early exhibits and the temple complexes that often hosted them. Additionally, this chapter will take a closer look at other traditional display practices which are a vital part of Japanese culture which occurred in various other spaces, both public and private. This study will maintain a focus on objects and themes that are also present in the collection of the Tokyo National Museum. By observing the following examples and experiences with these objects placed within their authentic framework, a closer understanding of the differences and the similarities between this and the cultural environment of the museum can be gathered in the next chapters.

Figure 5 – Picture of the Shōsōin Repository, the historical treasure house of the Tōdaiji temple in Nara. Estimated to have been built during the second half of the 8th century.

Figure 6 – A blue silk cord, one of the artifacts preserved in the Shōsōin Repository. The accompanying paper tag states that this cord was used for the Eye-opening ceremony of the Great Buddha at the Tōdaiji temple in the year 752. Photo from the archive of the Imperial Household Agency.

THE TEMPLE AS A MUSEUM

Throughout global history, the earliest occurrences of museum-like activities often involve religious institutions, such as temples and churches, and connections with an environment of economic or political power. This is also the case when observing Japan, where the earliest examples of this phenomenon can be found in temples situated close to political centers and other seats of power, such as the various institutions in Nara.[34] The historical treasure house of the Tōdaiji temple in Nara, the Shōsōin Repository, is perhaps the earliest example of such a Japanese "museum".

Treasure houses, or *shōsō*, were used by larger temples and government offices for storing important materials and documents. By doing so, these institutions were performing a role similar to many modern museums, by preserving valuable artifacts and information for future generations. The term *shōsō* now refers almost exclusively to the Shōsōin at the Tōdaiji temple, as it is one of the most important, and one of the very few, of these particular storehouses to survive to the modern day. The Shōsōin is a type of *kura* 蔵, a traditional Japanese warehouse used to store valuable commodities, treasures, and foodstuffs such as rice, known as an *azekura* 校倉 (Fig. 5). These types of *kura* consist of thick triangular logs fitted together, and are far more durable than the better known earthen *kura*. Unlike the earthen *kura*, however, the *azekura* is much more vulnerable to fire, making the storehouse more costly to build as it needed to be situated away from other constructions to reduce the risk of fire. Still, the Shōsōin has survived over the centuries, its raised floor and cypress logs acting as a natural climate-control system, and the lack of nails in its construction making it able to withstand earthquakes. Over 9000 artifacts of its collection are in a

[34] Nara was the capital of Japan during the era now known as the Nara period, from 710 to 794. It was customary to move the capital and establish a new court after the death of an emperor. Empress Genmei chose Nara to be the capital during her reign. The city was modeled after Chinese examples, as was much of Japanese society at the time, and Nara became Japan's first urban center as a result of several factors. Reforms during the era led to the establishment of a permanent capital in the city, and the establishment of Buddhism saw Nara become the first city to host a variety of important Buddhist temples, cultural centers, and monuments.

well-preserved condition, consisting of a wide variety of decorative arts, everyday objects, manuscripts, and religious treasures. An important part of the collection are the offerings made by Empress Kōmyō, as she made a large donation of over 600 objects originally belonging to her husband, the late Emperor Shōmu, to the Tōdaiji temple in the year 756. The Empress contributed artifacts to the temple another five times over the following years, and these objects came to be stored in the Shōsōin. The repository also preserved important instruments used in Buddhist ceremonies, such as the items used for the Consecration Ceremony of the Tōdaiji temple's famous Great Buddha statue in 752 (Fig. 6). Additionally, the collection from another *shōsō*, which belonged to the Kensakuin temple, was moved to the *shōsō* of the Tōdaiji temple in 950.[35]

What makes the collection at the Shōsōin especially valuable is the well-preserved and well-documented state of the artifacts. More often, items from the Nara (710-794) and Heian (794-1185) period which have survived to the modern day are recovered from archeological sites, and have been restored, preserved, and carefully studied in order to contextualize their origin and function. But the collection of the Shōsōin Repository has been properly stored and taken care of by the temple workers for over 1200 years, which has allowed the artifacts to survive despite the taxing climate conditions of Japan. Additionally, a number of objects have been tagged with original inscriptions, specifying the artifacts date of creation and during which ceremony it was used.[36] This innovative method, which is almost identical to the method used for museum and exhibit labels today, has ensured the proper transmission of a substantial amount of information, which enables scholars to study and interpret these objects in great detail today. However, unlike more modern museums, the collection of the Shōsōin was never on display, neither was it historically accessible to the public. In fact, one of the reasons the collection has been so incredibly well-preserved is due to

[35] "正倉院の由来," The Imperial Household Agency, accessed April 11, 2023, https://shosoin.kunaicho.go.jp/about/history

[36] "宝物について," The Imperial Household Agency, accessed April 11, 2023, https://shosoin.kunaicho.go.jp/about/treasure

the restricted access to the storehouse, which often required imperial permission to be opened.[37] Although the original Shōsōin still exists, the collection itself is no longer preserved within its walls. Contemporary facilities, the West and East Repository, have been built in 1962 and 1953 respectively, equipped with modern equipment and a climate-control system. Even within these modernized conditions, access to the collection is still limited. The storehouses are only opened for two months every year, in autumn, during which the staff conducts an examination on the condition of the artifacts. Some objects are occasionally on display in the Nara National Museum during the two months they are accessible, and reproductions of artifacts are available for loan and display.

Although the collection of the Shōsōin was not available for public viewing, the Tōdaiji temple itself did partake in museum-like acts of display, as did many other temples throughout Japan. In many ways, the act of visiting a temple is comparable to a museum visit; both involve travelling to a designated and special location in order to view objects and learn about them, albeit historically temple visits were generally made with religious rather than educational intentions. Still, even the modern museum tends to feel like a sacred place with its own code of conduct, a temple in its own right. The parallels between the modern museum and the traditional Japanese temple were especially visible through the practice known as *kaichō* 開帳. These events involved the temporary unveiling of religious objects, such as statues or relics, which were usually hidden from the public eye. These events are generally divided in two groups, *igaichō* 居開帳 or *kaichō*, and *degaichō* 出開帳. The first practice displays a religious treasure or image without removing it from the temple, and may even involve allowing the public to enter the temple's inner sanctum in order to view the object. This tradition is still fairly common in the present day. Less common nowadays is the practice of *degaichō*, which involved a religious icon being moved from its sanctuary to be

[37] "The Shosoin Repository," The Imperial Household Agency, accessed April 11, 2023, https://www.kunaicho.go.jp/e-about/shisetsu/shosoin01.html

Figure 7 – Illustration depicting a *kaichō* at the Ekōin Temple in Edo, in the early 19th century

From the illustrated book *Edo Meisho Zue* 江戸名所図会, 1836.

displayed elsewhere. For example, an icon, or a collections of objects, would travel from the provinces to the city of Edo to be displayed, or would even tour several locations before being returned to its temple. The pulling power of *kaichō* would draw street vendors, food stalls, and sometimes even carnival-like shows known as *misemono* 見世物 near the temple, which in turn attracted even more visitors to the events (Fig. 7). The tradition of *kaichō* can be traced back as early as the Heian period However, they became particularly frequent, more ambitious, and very popular among the people during the relatively peaceful years of the Edo period.[38]

The *kaichō* served a variety of important functions to both the participants and to the temple itself. For the visitors, a *kaichō* promised and opportunity for the expression of religious devotion, while simultaniously offering the thrill of a glimpse of secrecy and a moment of entertainment. For temples, a *kaichō* was a means of improving an temple's publicity, and could serve to spread sectarian propaganda. Additionally, the event could be organized to reach a monetary objective, which was especially important for institutions that did not receive funds from the *bakufu*. A *kaichō* was often organized in order to gather the donations needed for repairs and upkeep, or to provide money for larger restorations after the occurence of a natural distaster.

The tradition of *kaichō* reflects many museum-like qualities, both in its practice and its inadvertent side effects. For instance, souvenir broadsheets were sold to the *kaichō* visitors, made possible by the thriving Edo period woodblock print industry. These accesible prints depicted the event and the items on display, and made for a popular keepsake, on par with a postcard or catalogue bought after a museum visit today.[39] Likewise, much like modern-day temporary expositions, an *igaichō* promises a glimpse of something usually hidden or unique, while a *degaichō* almost perfectly mirrors the travelling exhibitions seen today. In all of these examples, the temporary nature of the events creates a sense of urgency, which in turn augments the appeal of

[38] Kornicki. "Public Display and Changing Values", 179.
[39] Ibid., 178-179.

the expositions. Furthermore, the success of a *kaichō* depended on the allure of the object or icon on display, which is an aspect often emphasized in documents relating to the later Meiji exhibitions and even in the advertisements for museum exhibitions in the modern era.[40] Although *kaichō* are by nature sacred events, the Edo period saw them transformed into occasions which offered both moments for religious encounters and for nonreligious amusement.

EXHIBITION DURING THE EDO PERIOD

During the middle years of the Edo period, the public became increasingly interested in *honzōgaku* 本草学, which is a catch-all term for the study of plants, minerals, and animals for use in Chinese medicine. Collections of medicinal herbs, natural samples, animal specimens, and various other related curiosities were exhibited to the public during special exhibitions.[41] These events, although fairly similar in nature, were called a wide variety of terms; names used to designate these exhibitions included *honzōkai* 本草会, *yakuhinkai* 薬品会 and even *hakubutsukai* 博物会. To avoid confusion, these events will be referred to by the more widely recognized term *bussankai* 物産会, which can be translated to 'product fair' or 'exhibit'. Small-scale *bussankai* were held in Osaka as early as 1751, and the first *bussankai* in Edo was organized by the herbalist Tamura Ransui (1718-1777) in 1757, at the grounds of the Yushima Seidō temple.[42] It was quickly followed by various similar events, which also made their way to the cities of Kumamoto and Kyoto in 1758 and 1761 respectively. However, it was not until the 19th century that *bussankai* became more public and well-frequented events that expanded to most of the major provincial towns.[43] By assembling and exhibiting large quantities of natural objects with the intended purpose of exchanging information

[40] Ibid., 178.
[41] Hyogo Museum of Art, *The Dream of a Museum*, 18.
[42] Aso, *Public Properties*, 17.
[43] Kornicki. "Public Display and Changing Values", 174.

and disseminating knowledge, these fairs employed an educational approach comparable to the natural history museums of the West. The *bussankai* became such recognized didactic tools, that the Meiji government employed various individuals who had organized *bussankai* to work on the domestic exhibitions of the Meiji period, which we will discuss in greater detail in the next chapter. However, the *bussankai* differed greatly from the later Meiji exhibitions, as they focused primarily on natural produce and lacked the antiquarian exhibits that featured so prominently in both the Meiji exhibitions and museums that followed.

Where *bussankai* are comparable to present-day natural history museums, a similar type of event corresponds more closely to modern day art exhibitions. *Shogakai* 書画会 and *shoga-tengankai* 書画展観会 were exhibitions featuring various types of paintings and works of calligraphy, which were organized in Kyoto at the end of the 18th century, but quickly found their way to Edo and other cities. *Shogakai* generally referred to events presenting recent creations, often even painted for the occasion of the exposition or during the event itself, while *shoga-tengankai* exhibited older pieces. Initially these events were quite private, only accessible to an invited circle, and often set in private homes and restaurants.[44] Toward the middle of the 19th century, however, *shogakai* became larger and more overtly commercial. The exhibitions grew significantly in scale and duration, and were made more accessible to the general public.[45] Both *shogakai* and *bussankai* were hosted at available public locations, which also included temples and temple grounds. The Yushima Seidō temple grounds hosted the first large-scale *bussankai* in 1757, and similar events and *bussankai* were staged in the same location on a regular, almost annual, basis.[46] The connection between exposition and temple spaces was already well established even before the Edo period. While the association with *kaichō* and temples seems logical, the association between sacred spaces and *bussankai* and *misemono* might seem less coherent to a Western audience. However,

[44] Hyogo Museum of Art, *The Dream of a Museum*, 18.
[45] Kornicki, "Public Display and Changing Values", 174.
[46] Aso, *Public Properties*, 17.

entertainment districts were often located close by temples and shrines, well before and throughout the Edo period. For the Japanese, the proximity of sexual, commercial and sensational entertainment did not diminish the sacredness of a temple. Instead, they occupied the same sphere for a number of reasons. First, the sacred grounds of a temple or shrine constituted a type of liminal space without ties to the everyday world, where people and ideas from different classes and realms could more easily meet. Second, temple sites often existed outside the regulations of ordinary government administration, thus attracting various affairs and transactions which challenged the boundaries of regulations and illegality.[47] This spatial logic became even more prominent with the characteristic urbanization of the Edo period. Temple complexes performed an important cultural function by providing a space for these types of displays, which improved their prestige even when the event in question did not directly benefit the institution as was the case during a *kaichō*. Hosting certain events emphasized the idea of the temple space as a place for learning and growth. For example, the more educational *bussankai* were generally associated with the comparatively academic Confucian temples, such as the Yushima Seidō temple. By organizing and hosting expositions and celebrations, temples also attracted more visitors to their place of worship. Much like the *kaichō* discussed earlier, it also became common for catalogues of *bussankai* and *shogakai* exhibits to be printed.[48] These prints and documents promoted the fairs and venues themselves, while allowing the visitors to study and admire the expositions after the event had finished.

EXHIBITION IN THE HOME AND PRIVATE SPACES

The display and the exposition of objects also has a long tradition within the walls of the Japanese house, which can be found in the examples of the *tokonoma* 床の間 and the *chigaidana* 違い棚 (Fig. 8). These features are part of the *shoin* style of domestic architecture mentioned in the

[47] Ibid., 18.
[48] Kornicki, "Public Display and Changing Values," 174 & 180.

previous chapter, which dates back to the Kamakura period (1185-1333), but became especially popular with the *samurai* and elite during the Edo period, and became much more widely diffused during the Meiji period. The *tokonoma* is an alcove part of a traditional Japanese *tatami* style room, slightly elevated in order to distinguish the nook from the floor of the room. As an integral part of the design of a traditional Japanese interior design, it is the only part of the room that is purposefully decorated, while the rest of the space is left intentionally bare and open. The objects placed in the *tokonoma* are carefully selected and arranged, with the intention of creating a harmonious and balanced composition. The arrangement is changed periodically, reflecting the changing seasons, certain special events and holidays, and the individual taste of the homeowner. Ornaments traditionally placed in the *tokonoma* are art objects such as hanging scrolls decorated with paintings or calligraphy, ceramic pieces, pottery, and flower arrangements. The *chigaidana* is a combination of two or more staggered shelves built into the wall, often next to the *tokonoma*. In some cases, the shelves are hidden between sliding doors and solely serve a storage purpose. However, when the shelves are exhibited, they become a companion of the *tokonoma* for the display of seasonal and tasteful decorations. Often these designated places for display are situated in the house, particularly in the room most guests would be received and entertained, or in the *chashitsu* 茶室, a distinct room or separate building constructed specifically to host the tea ceremony.[49]

The items displayed in the *tokonoma* are also an important part of the Japanese tea ceremony, or *sadō* 茶道, as are the utensils used during the preparation and consumption of the tea itself. Most notable is the *chawan* 茶碗, or tea bowl, from which the tea is consumed (Fig. 9). These beautiful containers vary greatly in style and design, as different types of tea bowls are used depending on the degree of formality, the type of tea prepared, and even the season.

[49] "Cha-shitsu," Britannica Academic, accessed April 10, 2023, https://academic-eb-com.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/levels/collegiate/article/cha-shitsu/22195

Figure 8 – An example of a *tokonoma* (L) and a *chigaidana* (R) used for exhibiting objects. Photo taken at the Kannon-in temple in Tottori prefecture.

Figure 9 – Tea bowl known as *Furisode*, from the Azuchi-Momoyama or Edo Period, 16th-17th century. From the collection of the Tokyo National Museum.

They are also an apt example from a category of Japanese art objects that are intended to be appreciated within their authentic environment. Simple and rough tea bowls with imperfections in the earthenware are desirable, especially for the consumption of thicker teas such as *matcha* 抹茶.

Even modern bowls deliberately eschew perfect circles and straight lines, and are moulded to fit comfortably in the shape of the hand. The imperfections mark the front and back of the tea bowl, knowledge of which is needed to correctly enjoy the prepared the during the ceremony. The texture of the bowl, the glaze, and its imperfections are all details to be admired during the ceremony, and some minutiae aspects of its design can only be experienced by physically handling and touching these objects.[50]

[50] Gerhardus Knuttel, *Japans Aardewerk ten dienste van de Theeceremonie* (The Hague: van Stockum en Zoon, 1948), 48 & 76.

CHAPTER 4

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TOKYO NATIONAL MUSEUM

After the success of the Yushima Seidō *hakurankai* and the rewarding participation at the *Weltausstellung* in Vienna, Japan continued to participate in similar international exhibitions throughout the 1880s and 1890s with great enthusiasm, their efforts matching in scale with participation of the United States and most European countries. Japan capitalized on the competitive environment of the expositions in order to manipulate the Western image of their country and improve their international status. Additionally, participation in the events was a means of locating new markets for export, researching technological and industrial development, and exploring new approaches to stimulate Japan's domestic economy.[51] The positive effects stemming from these events were observed by Japanese delegations, and convinced the Japanese government of the importance of similar domestic expositions and national museums for the cultural education of its citizens, supported in part by the extensive report and proposal written by Tsunetami Sano.[52] The new Exhibition Bureau, which was originally established to organize and oversee the Yushima Seidō exposition and the Vienna *Weltausstellung*, was charged with the task of creating new and innovative ways to educate the entire nation. The resulting institutions inspired a newfound admiration for Japan's cultural heritage, historical traditions, customs, and fashion among its citizens, forging a distinctive representation of the country as these features mixed with the modern developing cultural landscape of the Meiji era.

[51] Kornicki, "Public Display and Changing Values," 170.
[52] Angus Lockyer, "Japan at the Exhibition, 1867-1877: From Representation to Practice," *Senri Ethnological Studies* 54 (March 2001): 71.

This chapter will look at examples of early modern Japanese expositions and museums developed during the Meiji period and how they incorporated the new ideas of Western exposition and education. Additionally, we will examine the development of the museum now known as the Tokyo National Museum and explore various ideas and influences which have shaped the museum, its surroundings, and the institution as a whole.

THE FIRST NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL EXHIBITION

Motivated by the succes of the *hakurankai* and inspired by the international world expositions, the Japanese government initiated several domestic exhibitions during the early Meiji period, which would heavily influence the further development of the Japanese museum concept. These expositions were organized by the same Exhibition Bureau that oversaw the succesfull participation of Japan at the Vienna *Weltausstellung*. The first event in this series of large-scale exhibitions, known as the Domestic Exhibitions for the Promotion of Industry and Commerce, or *naikoku kangyō hakurankai* 内国勧業博覧会, took place in the newly constructed Ueno park in 1877 from the 21st of August until the 30th of November. As the name implies, this grand exposition was organized with the intent to promote the domestic industry of Japan. The government intended to organize this event once every five years in order to continue furthering Japan's progress, while shifting the dates slightly to coincide with the international world fairs much like the *hakurankai*.[53] Instead of educating the nation on its art and history, the displays were mainly focussed on presenting new developments in manufacturing and technology. Nevetheless, the connection to the international expositions and the permanent institutions following the National Industrial Exhibitions are important developments in the creation of the Tokyo National Museum, as will become evident later in this chapter.

[53] Sano, *Public Properties*, 34.

An interesting aspect to consider are the deliberate differences and deliberate similarities to the international fairs the National Industrial Exhibitions incoorporated in their expositions. For example, the inclusion of foreign exhibits was banned, and the organizers went through great lengths to ensure that the exhibits did not demonstrate the gap between Japanese and Western industry. The Exhibitions aimed to inspire progress by displaying the distinctions between examples of similar objects created using various methods, allowing the visitors to experience themselves the advantages and differences in quality between older products and new products manufactured using modern industrial techniques Yet, examples of advanced Western products were still needed for the exhibits to allow for such a comparative analysis. In fact, the Domestic Industrial Exhibitions included a great deal of overseas products in their display, but these were presented in such a way that they would not be interpreted as foreign.[54] At the same time, the organizers of the exhibition followed the Western models of the expositions in London, Vienna, and Paris to accomplish their didactic objectives. Rather than being a direct continuation of the already existing Japanese traditions of display described in the previous chapter, they were motivated by the internationally competitive environment of the world fairs. This new development could be found in the Western classifications the Industrial Exhibitions employed, and in the Western styled display methods used to exhibit the objects. Still, in their execution, the Industrial Exhibitions inadvertently revealed themselves far more beholden to the familiar elements of the manner of presentation in the Edo period.[55] Participating exhibitors naturally employed recognizable techniques to draw visitors to their displays, and the reporters documenting the exhibits often found themselves lingering on presentations that drew their attention by invoking earlier forms of display.[56] Additionally, as the Industrial Exhibitions followed the Western expositions as examples, the objects on display were available for purchase, but could not leave the premises of the exposition for its duration. In order to boost domestic commerce, which was one of the objectives of the exposition, the authorities

[54] Lockyer, "Japan at the Exhibition," 72.
[55] Kornicki, "Public Display and Changing Values," 171.
[56] Lockyer, "Japan at the Exhibition," 74.

allowed the participants to set up stalls outside of the exhibition yet inside Ueno park, where they could sell the products displayed within the exposition's enclosure. The resulting fair-like atmosphere paralleled the bustling activity surrounding the earlier *bussankai*, *shogakai*, and *kaichō*, which this new type of exposition was trying to distinguish itself against. This likeness was not lost on the visitors of the Industrial Exhibition, as various reporters made the same comparison.[57]

THE FIRST BIJUTSUKAN

As the previous part illustrated, the domestic industrial fairs were a direct product of the influence of the international expositions, which is evident in the Western classifications employed and the Western styled display methods used for the objects. The first National Industrial Exhibition was modeled in large part after the 1876 Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, and exhibited objects in roughly the same six categories; manufacturing, minerals and metallurgy, machinery, agriculture, horticulture, and art.[58] Although the main focus was on the display of products, the Industrial Exhibitions did include artworks and a designated art gallery, a *bijutsukan* 美術館, likely inspired by the gallery at the exposition in Philadelphia (Fig. 10). This art exhibition, and the building it was presented in, are of note to the development of the Japanese museum. For example, the objects displayed as part of the "art" category demonstrate the fact that the definition of *bijutsu* 美術 was still unfamiliar and not entirely clear to the Japanese, as the exhibit included objects that would not be classified as such in the present day. For example, the art gallery included a collection of coins provided by the national mint, postage stamps and a display of postcards prepared by the Postal Bureau, and a set of official stamp seals and account books from the Currency Bureau. At the same time, a series of woodblock prints by the artist Kiyochika Kobayashi (1847-1915) were presented as

[57] Ibid.,73.
[58] Hyogo Museum of Art, *The Dream of a Museum*, 27.

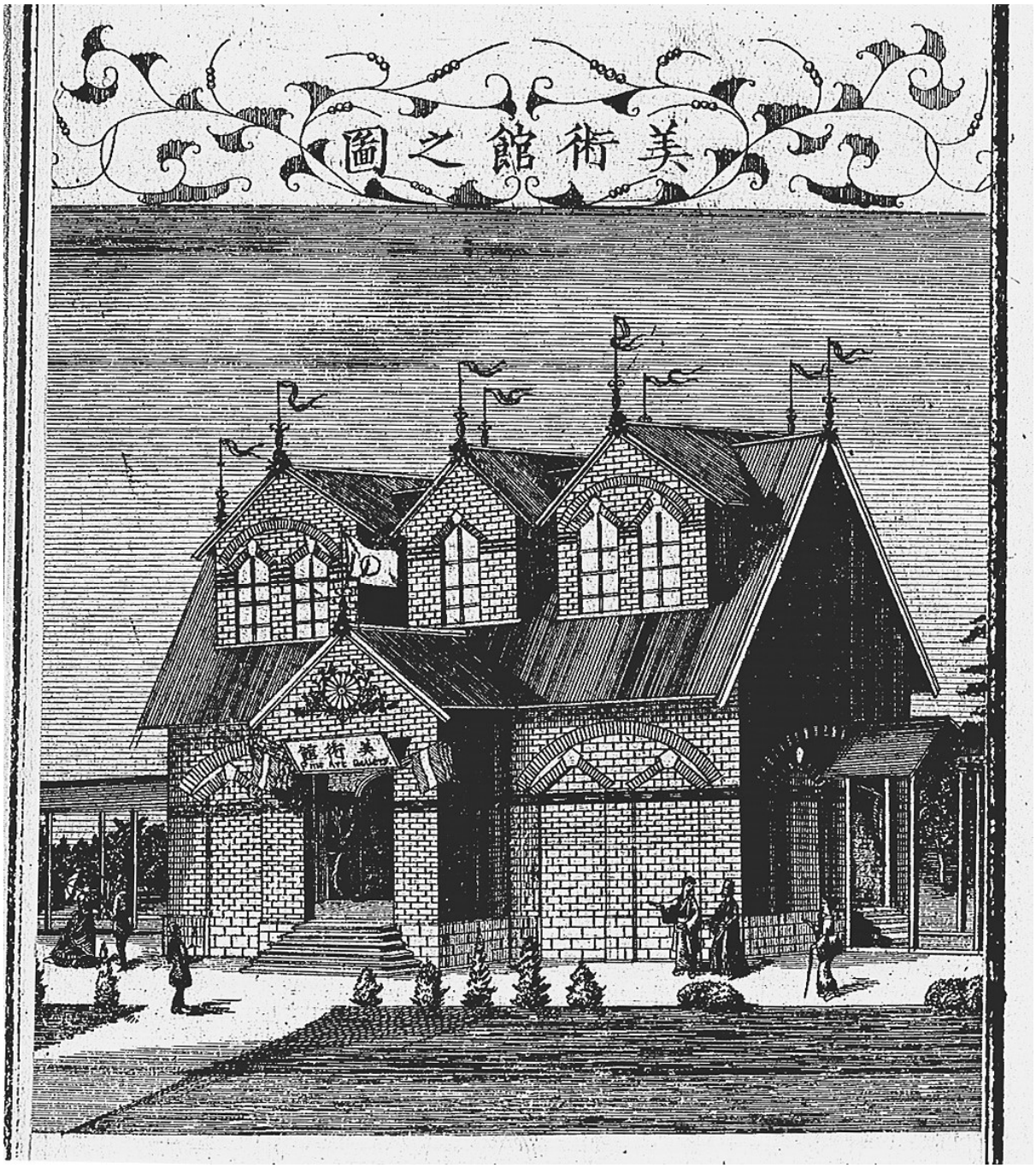

Figure 10 – Engraving depicting the Art Gallery, or *Bijutsukan*, designed by Tadahiro Hayashi, as it appeared at the first National Industrial Exhibition in 1877. The sign above the entrance displayed both the Japanese name of the building, 美術館, and in English, “Fine Art Gallery”.

part of the manufacturing exhibit, while in our present day Japanese woodblock prints are seen as one of Japan's most important artistic creations.[59]

The art exhibit was displayed in a building constructed specifically for the event, and was one of the only permanent buildings amongst many temporary ones, which would remain after the occassion to become part of the future museum complex. The simple brick building, designed by the Japanese architect Tadahiro Hayashi (1835-1893), invoked the modern feeling of the Meiji period with its Western masonry construction, while the boxy design and gabled top would have reminded the Japanese public of a *kura* treasurehouse.[60] The open floor plan allowed for free placement of glass display cases. Pictures could be exhibited efficiently on the solid walls without the interruption of windows, while light was provided by a row of elevated dormer windows set high in the facade. These design elements were clearly inspired by Western museums in Europe and the United States. Another remarkable feature of this building was its name, *bijutsukan*, which not only adopted the modern Japanese word for art, but was the first official use of a term that is now used to refer to art museums.[61] Inside the gallery, an extensive collection of paintings was displayed, mounted on the large walls in multiple rows, while glass display cases presented various objects such as ceramics, bronzes, lacquer, and the contentious art displays mentioned before (Fig. 11). The art display included both traditional Japanese ink paintings and contemporary Western-style oil paintings, all mounted in wooden frames and attached to the walls. Although most of the paintings depicted traditional Japanese subjects, their method of display and configuration were unusual, imitating the way Japanese art was presented abroad at the international exhibitions. Framed artworks were also

[59] Ibid., 27-28.
[60] Tseng, *Imperial Museums,* 44.
[61] In the modern Japanese language, the two most commonly used words to designate museums are *hakubutsukan* 博物館 and *bijutsukan* 美術館. The former is generally used to refer to institutions touching on historical, ethnographical, archaeological or scientific concepts, while the latter is used to describe museums and locations that exhibit fine and modern art. Some argue that the distinction is instead determined by the museum's materiality, as *hakubutsukan* display "things" and *bijutsukan* display pictures and photos. Interestingly enough, the Tokyo National Museum is designated as *hakubutsukan*, despite the fact that the collection mainly focusses on fine art, while similar institutions such as the Dutch *Rijksmuseum* are understood to be *bijutsukan*. This etymological distinction is incredibly interesting, but unfortunately not a subject we are able to explore further in this thesis.

present at the Yushima Seidō *hakurankai*, but the scope of this new exhibit was far beyond that of the earlier exposition. The art gallery was well visited, as the Industrial Exhibition attracted well over 450,000 visitors during its 102 days of operation, but the experimental arrangement was met with mixed reviews.[62] The new understanding of art and the concept of a museum was something new to almost all Japanese, and both the visitors and participants were unfamiliar with the approach of an exposition.[63] Nevertheless, the Art Gallery was an important marker in the development of the modern Japanese museum, as it was the first building in Japan specifically designed and dedicated as a designated space for display. It was an innovative and hybrid exhibit, containing both elements from Western and Japanese methods of exposition, which influenced the Japanese idea of what an art museum should be long after its initial creation.[64]

FROM UCHIYAMASHITA TO UENO

The Tokyo National Museum as we know it today has gone through several significant transformations since its inception as the *hakurankai*. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the collection at the Yushima Seidō temple remained available for the public on select days each month, even after the exposition came to a close, thus becoming the first permanent museum institution in Japan. The Yushima Seidō temple also housed the first modern Japanese library, the *shojakukan* 書籍館, which opened in the temple's former grand hall in 1872 to coincide with the opening of the *hakurankai*. This early iteration of a contemporary public library, created under the jurisdiction of the Education Bureau, is estimated to have housed over 130,000 books, and was met with great public interest. In 1874, the *shojakukan* was moved to a *kura* in Asakusa, which was formerly used

[62] Tseng, *Imperial Museums,* 46-47.
[63] Hyogo Museum of Art, *The Dream of a Museum*, 27-28.
[64] Ibid., 22.

Figure 11 – Wooblock triptych depicting the interior of the Art Gallery at the first National Industrial Exhibition, by Utagawa Hiroshige III. The unique presentation of Japanese paintings framed and mounted on the walls is clearly depicted.

Figure 12 – Painting of the original Honkan designed by Josiah Conder, 1882. From the image archives of the Tokyo National Museum.

to store rice, and became known as the Asakusa Bunko. The museum and the library would remain separated until 1881, when the library collection was moved to the museum library in Ueno.[65]

The Yushima Seidō temple complex also hosted one of the earliest art expositions organized by the Japanese government, the *shoga tenkan* 書画展観 in 1874, which was held in the Taiseiden Hall. This exposition would have an incredible influence on the further development of early Meiji period art movements, as its exhibits included both old and more recent Japanese paintings, and even had some Western-style oil paintings on display.[66] This new style of paintings was also featured in the Industrial Exhibition's Art Gallery.

In March 1873, the *hakurankai* exhibit was moved from the Yushima temple grounds to a new building in Uchiyamashita-cho, as a result of the merging of museum-related Bureaus of the Education Ministry and the Exhibition Bureau mentioned in the second chapter. The Yamashitamonnai Museum, more commonly known as the Yamashita Museum, consisted of seven buildings in which it categorized its collection based on a similar Western classification method which was also employed at the *hakurankai*. It housed a collection of anitques, animals, plants, minerals, agricultural and foreign items. The museums also included a library, a medicinal garden, and a greenhouse. The large composite institution was unfortunately short-lived, and only hosted two temporary exhibitions in 1873 and 1874, though these exhibitions were well received by the public. The first exposition displayed objects which had been collected for the *Weltausstellung* in Vienna, which were not sent overseas. The second exhibit also included artifacts returned and obtained during the *Weltausstellung*.[67] Like the *hakurankai* that came before, the museum remained open to the public after the expositions had closed, on days ending in 1 or 6. After governmental reformations in 1875, the Yamashita Museum was split into two independent institutions, one under

[65] "Shojakukan and Asakusa Bunko : Foundation of the museum library," Tokyo National Museum, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_free_page/index.php?id=146&lang=en
[66] Hyogo Museum of Art, *The Dream of a Museum*, 18.
[67] Sano, *Public Properties*, 53.

the Education Ministry and the other under the Home Ministry.[68] Three important figures in regards of the development of the national museum, Tsunetami Sano, Hisanari Machida (1838-1897), and Yoshio Tanaka (1838-1916), were urging the museum to be moved to Ueno. Machida had called attention to various faults present in the Yamashita site in a report published in 1873, which listed small size of the museum grounds, the absence of fire breaks for protection, and the lack of resources to care for the animal and plant collection as crucial shortcomings. Sano mentioned these points in his report on the Vienna *Weltausstellung*, where he argued that the site was not well equiped for a succesfull national museum. Tanaka also saw the move to Ueno as an opportunity to to realize his ideal full-fledged zoo.[69]

The first Domestic Industrial Exhibition was held on the grounds of the former Kaneiji temple, which had burned down in the Battle of Ueno during the Boshin war, and had been designated as a public park to be regulated by the Tokyo metropolitan administration in 1873.[70] The coveted location of the former temple's central structure was the source of much political friction and negotiation between various museum-like institutions and bureaus. However, when the Home Ministry assumed control over the Exhibition Bureau, their diplomatic dominance assured the site as the new location for Japan's National Museum. The Exhibition Bureau began development on the museum grounds by preparing the site for the first Domestic National Exhibition. After the Industrial Exhibition had finished, construction began on the main structure of the museum, the Honkan 本館.

The building served as the art gallery for the second National Industrial Exhibition in 1881. The Yamashita collection was relocated to Ueno, and the building became known as the Ueno Museum in 1882, when the museum and the newly constructed zoo were inaugurated in the presence of

[68] Tseng, *Imperial Museums*, 41-42.
"Yamashitamon-nai Museum : The Museum under the Home Ministry," Tokyo National Museum, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_free_page/index.php?id=148.
[69] Sano, *Public Properties*, 54-55.
[70] Ibid., 55.

Emperor Meiji.[71] Machida became the museum's first director until 1882, after which Tanaka became the second. The museum was now more accesible than ever before, as it was open to the public every day, only closing on Mondays and around the New Year.

DESIGNING UENO PARK AND THE MUSEUM

The current version of the Tokyo National Museum is still located in Ueno park, which has been developed into a public park stretching over 538,000 square meters. It is now home to a collection of significant museums, temples, universities and art academies, a concert hall, a library, a zoo, and several memorials. Inspired by the observations made by the member of the Iwakura mission, the Japanese government founded the park following Western example of the South Kensington area in London. South Kensington and its museum were understood by the Japanese to be the permanent adaptation of the Great Exhibition of 1851, and in an effort to recreate its succes and beneficial significance, the Japanese government aimed to create a similar space in the continously developing and expanding city of Tokyo. The dualist nature of the design of the park, stuck between Japanese tradition and Western innovation, is visible even in its modern appearance. Perhaps one of the best examples of the way the park embodies the complex power relations of the Meiji period is the design, construction, and subsequent development of the Ueno Museum building itself.

In his multi-volume report, Sano had suggested the former site of the Kaneiji temple as most suitable for the construction of a new freestanding museum.[72] When the project was finally initiated after many setbacks and much planning, the design of the first Japanese Museum was realized with the help from the British architect Josiah Conder, who is now commonly refered to as "the father of

[71] Ibid., 55-56.
"Ueno Museum: The Original Honkan," Tokyo National Museum, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_free_page/index.php?id=150.
[72] Tseng, *Imperial Museums*, 42.

the modern Japanese architecture".[73] Like Conder's other work in the country, the final building featured a new and unique mix of Western architecture and modern Japanese principles (Fig. 12). The impression of the building was defined by distinct features that emphasized the newness of the modern Meiji era, such as the use of brick and mortar, and large windows distributed evenly over the full horizontal lenght of the exterior wall. The most striking element of the design was the portruding front facade, accentuated by a set of pillars crowned by decorative bulbous domes. These elements were far removed from the architectural traditions of Japan, creating with the museum an emblem of a new and modern institution, and a modern architectural style without discernable references to Japan's indigenous characteristics.[74]

Like the Art Gallery constructed for the Industrial Exhibition in 1877, the interior of the building was composed entirely of exhibition rooms. The 1877's Gallery was located close to the new main hall of the museum, and remained as an adjoining wing. Yet, the Ueno museum lacked some of the innovations which were present in the configuration of the Art Gallery during the first Industrial Exhibition. While the Industrial art exhibition had presented paintings framed and mounted on the Art Gallery's walls, the new Ueno museum presented all objects in glass cases, regardless of medium (Fig. 13). Furthermore, the open floor plan and high-set windows of the Gallery had allowed for experimental presentation and exposition methods. The new Ueno Museum building consisted of thirty exhibition rooms, laid out in a fixed, linear, circulating path. However, the building did not have a central courtyard to act as a spatial focus, and lacked a built-in skylight or partially glazed roof providing additional sources of light – both features existing in various purposefully built Western museum structures at the time.[75] This meant that most spaces were lit only from one side of the

[73] Josiah Condor (1852-1920) was a British architect, who came to Japan in 1877. He was hired by the Meiji government an worked on a number of public and private architectural projects in Tokyo and Yokohama. His works include the Deer Cry Pavilion, or *Rokumeikan*, the Holy Resurrection Cathedral, or *Nikolai-dou*, and the Mitsui Guest House. Unfortunately, most of his buildings have not survived until the modern day.
Masaaki Morishita, *The Empty Museum: Western Cultures and the Artistic Field in Modern Japan* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 6.
Tseng, *Imperial Museums of Meiji Japan,* 52

[74] Tseng, *Imperial Museums of Meiji Japan,* 60-63.

[75] Ibid., 67-68.

room. Additionally, most of the rooms were nearly identical in shape and size. These two factors severely limited the possibilities for display when compared to overseas museums, and confined the exhibitions to the shape of the rooms. While the new Ueno Museum presented an important marker in the development of Japan's new architecture, its interior design and the configuration of its exhibits did not stimulate further experimentation for the Japanese museum to find its exhibition style.

In 1889, ownership of the Ueno Museum was transferred to the Imperial household, and its name was changed to the Imperial Museum. This seperated the institution from the government and ended the museum's long involvement with the National Industrial Exhibitions.[76] The name was changed once more in 1900 to the Tokyo Imperial Household Museum. A new building, designed by the Japanese architect Tōkuma Katayama (1854-1917), was opened in 1908 and presented to the crown prince Yoshihito as a wedding gift. This new construction, called the Hyōkeikan, was quite distinctive in its design from the Honkan. As the building was intended for displaying Japan's new definition of fine art, predominantly sculptures and paintings, Katayama took inspiration from ancient Greek and Roman architecture. The Hyōkeikan improved on many of the Honkan's shortcomings, as it had a circular central hall, and made full use of natural lighting.[77] Unfortunately, these design choices did not accomplish their intended effect, as objects on display in the Hyōkeikan were placed in glass cases in the same manner as in the Honkan (Fig. 14). These glass boxes protected the art from theft and inappropriate touching, but this method of display conflicted with the traditional way of viewing Japanese paintings, while the display cases cluttered the museum's interior architecture, which Katayama had designed under the assumption that the paintings would be hung on the walls. Just two months after the opening of the Hyōkeikan, an anonymous critic submitted an extensive report on the shortcomings of the museum. They especially criticized the

[76] Yoshida, "Tohaku" and "Minpaku," 83.
Tokyo National Museum, "The Original Honkan."
[77] "Royal Gallery : The opening of the Hyokeikan," Tokyo National Museum, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_free_page/index.php?id=151.

glass display cases, calling attention to the reflections on the glass and the sizes of the cases themselves often obstructing view of the works on display. They urged the museum to conceive a new and inventive way of displaying Japanese art, adapted to the unique properties of Japanese artworks.[78] Efforts to improve the display methods of the Hyōkeikan were unfortunately held up by administrative indecisiveness, and the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 caused the museums to reorganize and change significantly. The Hyōkeikan no longer featured the critized displays following the restructuring of the collection, as its exhibits focussed instead on post-Meiji art, which also included contemporary Western art as of 1948. After another adjustment in 1956, the Hyōkeikan was used for the display of the museum's archaeological collection.[79]

The collection exhibited in the main building of the Imperial Household Museum was reorganized in 1918, by initiative of the museum's director Rintarō Mori (1862-1922). The galleries of the Honkan were divided according to a chronological overview of the Japanese historical periods. The objects and works on display were arranged as to represent their period, while certain masterpieces and particular artists were highlighted within their corresponding era. This sequential method of display is the model which most present-day museums implement in their exhibits.[80] When the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 hit Tokyo in an unforeseen disaster, much of the museum's buildings were destroyed. The 1877's Art Gallery, the museum's storage spaces and the Honkan itself were unsalvageable. Fortunately, most of the museum's collection evaded irreparable damage. The most recent addition to the museum complex, the Hyōkeikan, had withstood the force of the quake. It was reopened as a temporary exhibition space in 1924, while the other buidlings were demolished and rebuilt. Although the Hyōkeikan was much smaller than the Honkan, the space was utilized to organize exhibitions which rotated on a regular basis, until the construction of the

[78] Tseng, *Imperial Museums*, 204-206.
[79] Ibid., 209.
[80] Yoshida, "Tohaku" and "Minpaku," 84.

new museum was completed in 1938.[81] The new Honkan, designed by Japanese architect Jin Watanabe (1887-1973), appeared quite distinct from its predecessor, with its compelling mix of a reinforced concrete neo-classical base, a tiled roof inspired by the traditional Japanese Imperial Crown style, and several elements alluding to historical architecture (Fig. 15). The striking design of the facade of the new Honkan is now the trademark appearance of the Tokyo National Museum. Some of its features will be inspected in more detail in the next chapter.

Not only was the physical appearance of the museum altered as a result of the earthquake, the collection was transformed as well. Due to the limited space available during the rebuilding of the Honkan, the animal, plant and mineral collections were transferred to the Tokyo Museum, now known as the National Science Museum, in 1925. The new museum shifted its narrative to concentrate primarily on national history and fine art in due course. Additionally, one year before the opening of the new Honkan, the museum decided to introduce a new system for the classification of its collection. This reform abolished the historical department of the museum by uniting it with the art and decorative art departments, in order to reclassify the historical collections with a focus on their aesthetic and artistic qualities.[82] The archaeological department remained, although the majority of the museum's foreign archaeological and ethnological objects were removed from display. The Tokyo Imperial Household Museum proclaimed itself a "Museum of Oriental Arts and Antiquities", and specialized its exhibits on the fine arts of Japan.[83] After the Second World War, the Imperial Museums of Japan were returned to the state. The museum became known as the Tokyo National Museum, and was placed once again under the authority of the Ministry of Education.[84]

[81] "The Great Kanto Earthquake and the Museum : From Taisho to Showa era," Tokyo National Museum, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_free_page/index.php?id=152.
[82] "Construction of the new Honkan : The Museum during World War II," Tokyo National Museum, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_free_page/index.php?id=153.
[83] Yoshida, "Tohaku" and "Minpaku," 85.
[84] "Tokyo National Museum : The post-war era," Tokyo National Museum, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_free_page/index.php?id=154.

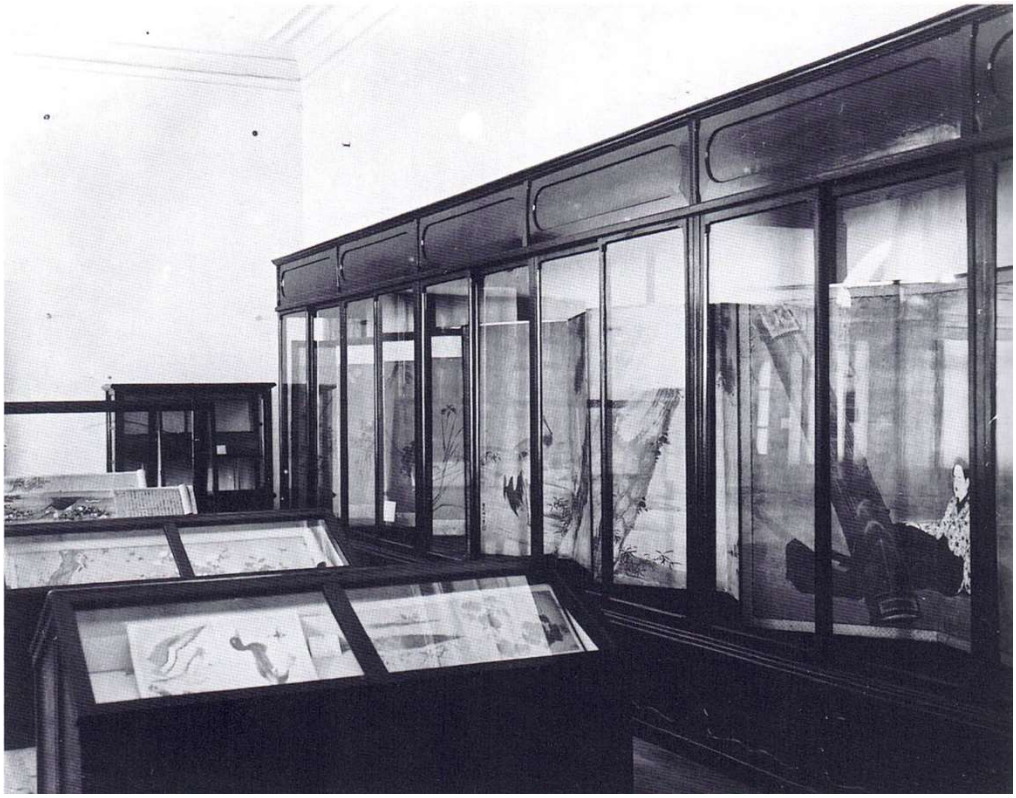

Figure 13 – Interior of the Ueno Museum Honkan, designed by Josiah Conder. The Japanese art is displayed in glass cases. From the image archives of the Tokyo National Museum.

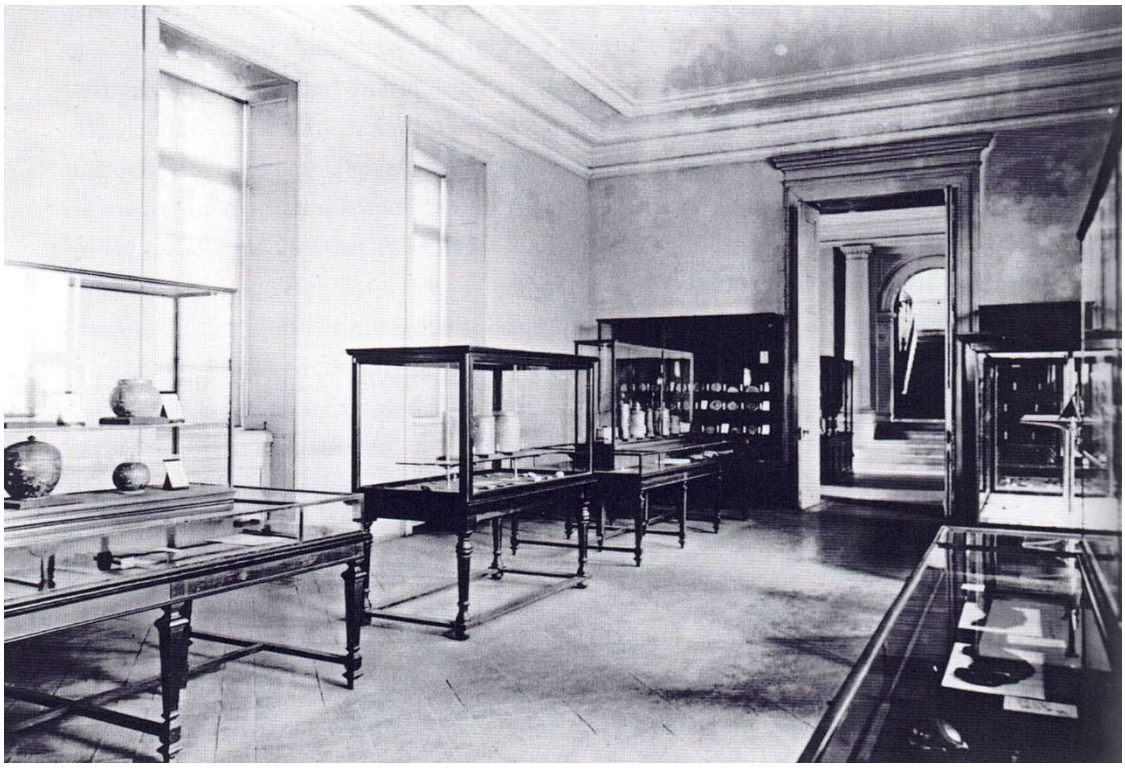

Figure 14 – Interior of the Hyōkeikan building, a view of the art displays on the ground floor. From the image archives of the Tokyo National Museum.

PRESENTING, PRESERVING, AND SHAPING THE NATION

As a result of the drastic directions taken by the government during the early Meiji period, and the principles of *bunmei kaika*, a great deal of Japan's historical treasures were lost in the chaos of modernization and unchecked exportation of Japanese traditional paraphernalia to the West. Due to the focus on progress, many Japanese citizens came to view their cultural heritage as antiquated, and were not distressed by the disappearance of these cultural artifacts from their everyday lives. Another factor contributing to the loss of national heritage was the government-mandated seperation of Shintoism and Buddhism, which caused an increase in anti-Buddhist acts known as *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈.[85] As the Meiji period progressed, anxiety around the loss of Japan's national identity began to take shape. As mentioned in the second chapter, a large part of the collection presented at the *hakurankai* was comprised of Japanese antiques and traditional objects. This was in part the result of the "Proclamation concerning the Preservation of Antiquities" issued by the Meiji government in 1871, which was the very first law related to the protection of Japan's cultural heritage.[86] This law resulted in a full-scale nationwide investigation the next year, known as the Jinshin Survey 壬申検査, which was an attempt to document the variety of objects and treasures were kept at local temples and shrines.

Even after the official introduction of Buddhism somewhere during the course of the 6th century, the national acceptance of the 'foreign' religion was not effortless. Nevertheless, Buddhism became an important part of Japan's religious heritage, in part as a result of the Buddhist patronage of the Imperial family. Over the centuries, Buddhist practices merged at times with Japan's

[85] The term *haibutsu kishaku* defines the act of destroying Buddhist images, writings, and temples motivated by anti-Buddhist ideology. This term is used primarily in relation to the anti-Buddhist modevement of the early Meiji period. The tumultuous history of the acceptance of Buddhism in Japan is a nuanced and complicated topic far too complex to fully explore in this thesis, but the idea of *haibutsu kishaku* needs to be mentioned here due to its direct connection to Japan's first effort to define its national heritage, and the introduciton of the first laws to protect said heritage.

[86] Yoshida, "Tohaku" and "Minpaku," 80.

indigenous Shinto belief, and many Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines became intermingled into a single sacred complex. In an effort to solidify a 'pure' Japanese nationalist identity, the new government adopted Shintoism as a state religion after the Meiji Restoration. This led to the state-mandated split between Buddhism and Shintoism, which saw a rise in anti-Buddhist sentiment across the Japanese nation. The often violent movement known as *haibutsu kishaku*, literally meaning "abolish Buddhism, destroy Shākyamuni", caused the destruction of many temples, religious writings, and various Buddhist items and statues.[87] Additionally, valuable traditional objects became damaged due to neglience, or were lost in foreign trades. The Jinshin survey was an effort to preserve these treasures and see them recognized as national heritage.[88]

As the Jinshin Survey was part of the preparatory operations for Japan's participation at the Vienna *Weltausstellung*, many of the organizers of the *hakurankai* were involved in the fieldwork. Participants included members of the Exhibition Bureau and the Ministry of Education, and the future museum director Hisanari Machida. The scale of the Jinshin Survey was unprecedented, as even permission to open the Shōsōin Repository was obtained.[89] The Survey resulted in the collection, and subsequent study, of a large amount of information on Japanese architecture and art, in what might be considered as Japan's first extensive attempt at museology and an early effort toward a national museum. The Japanese government began reframing the treasures uncovered by the Jinshin Survey as part of Japan's national "art" heritage in the years that followed, by means of state-sponsored art education, and the inclusion of Buddhist icons at the *hakurankai* and subsequent early incarnations of the museum. Efforts to reshape the Western image of Japanese Buddhist art can be traced to the Japanese government's attempts to have Buddhist icons be presented at the international fairs as part of the art exhibits, rather than the manufactured goods

[87] Kornicki. "Public Display and Changing Values", 186.
[88] Yoshida, "Tohaku" and "Minpaku," 80.
[89] "The Jinshin Survey : Research of cultural properties," Tokyo National Museum, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_free_page/index.php?id=147.

exhibits. This request was finally realized at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, and the *Exposition Universelle* of 1900 in Paris.[90]

Ventures such as the Jinshin Survey and the active reframing of objects through exposition and education are exceptionally effective strategies for the building of a national identity, a technique employed by nearly every nation attempting to spark the flame of nationalism during the 19th and 20th century.[91] The public perspective on Buddhist treasures uncovered by the Survey was effectively changed through the use of the Western museum model. Their place in society was transformed and apotheosized by using the didactic tools the institution facilitated, as was the case with various other aesthetic and historical artifacts. Above all, by placing certain artifacts in an exposition or museum, they are given new meaning and are actively reframed as national properties. Whether for the purpose of presenting an appropriate identity to an international audience, or for the building of a new national identity befitting the new post-Meiji modern Japan, these artifacts were selected to represent Japan, and the exhibitions and the museums of the late 19th century invited its visitors to participate in the process of building a nation.[92] Political museumization is a powerful tool for defining a nation's shape and identity, and the domestic exhibitions and early museums of Japan show the meticulous effort of the government's attempts at directing the country toward a more advanced and defined version of itself.

[90] Sano, *Public Properties*, 32
[91] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 183-185.
[92] Sano, *Public Properties*, 35

CHAPTER 5

TRADITION AND CHANGE IN THE TOKYO NATIONAL MUSEUM

As we have explored in the previous chapters, the Tokyo National Museum is the current final incarnation of Japan's first attempts at the adoption of Western museum practices, classification, and methods of display. This makes the museum an interesting case study for a variety of subjects, such as the transitions in Japan's self-identification through historical artifacts, and the changes in the museum's collection policies. In this chapter, we will examine various aspects of the museum which relate to Japanese tradition and display methods that predate the Meiji period and the introduction of the Western concept of a museum.

Historically, the museum has tried to distinguish itself from historical traditions of Japanese display in order to strengthen its association with Western display methods, which were seen as more respectable, especially during the Meiji period. This implication is still discernible to this day, as the museum often likens itself to the more scientific *bussankai* and Western exhibitions, rather than the practices like *kaichō* and *misemono*.[93] Observing the Tokyo National Museum superficially, the museum appears as an institution which has perfectly adapted and shaped itself to fit the Western concept of a museum. However, closer inspection reveals exclusive aspects of Japanese tradition and various cultural ideas pertaining to objects and their place in society which have seeped through the seemingly unyielding Western façade of the museum. Additionally, the more modern installations within the museum have found new and creative methods of presenting historical artifacts in a more genuine manner, both through new approaches and the implementation of modern technology. This chapter will take a closer look at the current incarnation of the Tokyo National Museum, and will attempt to illustrate the museum's unique features by examining the

[93] Tokyo National Museum, "History of the TNM: Yushima Seidō Exposition."
Kornicki, "Public Display,"193-195.

historical continuity in a number of its exhibits, as well as the recent developments towards a more genuinely "Japanese museum" and the new traditional connections realized in the recent temporary expositions and changes. This chapter will focus primarily on the exhibitions presented in the Honkan, and the recent temporary exhibitions organised to celebrate the Tokyo National Museum's 150th year of operation. These temporary expositions included a variety of fascinating new approaches to the museum's artifacts. Here, we will study various elements of these expositions in order to detect their contemporary relation with historical Japanese traditions.

THE MUSEUM AS A TEMPLE

The Tokyo National Museum is one of the largest art museums in the world, and is part of Japan's National Institutes for Cultural Heritage. The current Tokyo National Museum complex consists of several buildings dedicated to expositions, a large garden, and a research facility. The Hyōkeikan is, at the time of writing this thesis, undergoing maintenance, but is still used for special exhibitions and events. The Kuroda Memorial Hall, was built in 1928 and renovated and reopened in 2015. It is dedicated to the works of the artist Kuroda Seiki (1866-1924), an leading figure in the Japanese Western Style painting movement. The Tōyōkan 東洋館, or Asian Gallery, was added to the museum complex in 1968, and reopened in 2013 after a refurbishment. Its exhibitions feature art and historical artifacts from various regions in Southeast and Central Asia, including China, Korea, India, and Egypt. The Heiseikan was added in 1999, and features special exhibitions alongside a permanent exhibition on Japanese archaeology. The Hōryūji Hōmotsukan 法隆寺宝物館, or Gallery of Hōryūji Treasures, opened in 1999, and was built specifically to house the items of the Hōryūji Temple which were given to the Imperial Household in 1878. The museum's garden also includes

five historical *chashitsu* teahouses, which have been reconstructed at the museum grounds, which can be booked to host tea ceremonies and special cultural gatherings.[94]

The current version of the museum still embodies the connection between traditional Japanese display and the temple. Not only does the complex stand on the former grounds of the Kaneiji temple, the museum also enacts this identity through both its appearance and principles. The most recent version of the Honkan connects much more strongly to Japanese traditional architecture, especially when compared to the earlier rendition by Josiah Conder. However, the new building does adhere to some of Conder's building principles, such as his tendency to express a nation's identity through ornamental fragments worked into the facade of a building, without altering the Western interior format and structural integrity.[95] The Honkan is a perfect illustration of this practice, as the layout of the building clearly mirrors that of its predecessor, but the outside appearance is executed in an impressive example of "Modern Oriental Style" 東洋風近世式 (Fig. 15).[96] The museum's design takes inspiration from various forms of historical architecture, which are intrinsically connected to Japan's temples and shrines. Additionally, the roof of the museum is decorated with traditional *onigawara* 鬼瓦 roof tiles, which are decorative tiles depicting intimidating visages of Japanese monsters known as *oni* 鬼 (Fig. 16). As they are most commonly found on Buddhist temples, their inclusion further deepens the impression of the museum as a temple. Contrasting the decorated roof is the monolithic reinforced concrete base of the museum, which is designed to appear as a strong monument without discernible windows. This calls to mind the image of the traditional Japanese storehouse, the *kura*, which in turn connects the museum to the concept of a safe and protected construction for the safekeeping of treasures, as examined in the third chapter. A

[94] "Visitor Information and Museum Map," Tokyo National Museum, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_free_page/index.php?id=114.
[95] Tseng, *Imperial Museums*, 81.
[96] Yoshida, "Tohaku" and "Minpaku," 85.

museum's architecture is an important reflection and representation of the collections inside, especially in the case of buildings constructed for the very purpose of becoming a museum.[97]

The connection between the temple and the museum can also be traced in its collection, as the Tokyo National Museum protects and curates a large amount of important religious artifacts. This is in part due to the museum's early collecting policies and operations, such as the Jinshin Survey in 1872 discussed in chapter four. Additionally, the Hōryūji temple in Nara, whose collection mirrors that of the Shōsōin in age and significance, donated over 300 artifacts to the early museum in 1878 for study and safekeeping.[98] Buddha statues and religious artifacts have been at the heart of early museum-like activities throughout Japanese history, and are now still, an important part of the museum. One of the most recent additions to the museum's collection are two Buddhist guardian statues which were once enshrined in the Shiga prefecture, and are estimated to originate somewhere between the 12th and 13th century. The statues had been completely destroyed by the incredibly powerful Muroto typhoon of 1934, but their fragments were collected and protected. The museum initiated a project for the complicated reconstruction in 2019, which was completed in 2022. These statues are typically placed on either side of a temple gate to protect it, and their inclusion in the museum after such an intense restoration feels similarly significant. Hirosuke Sato, a curator of the Tokyo National Museum, expresses a relevant sentiment during a documentary for the NHK, when he states that he hopes that "going forward, they'll become guardians for the museum itself."[99]

[97] Janet Marstine, *New Museum Theory and Practice: An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 59.
[98] "The Gallery of Horyuji Treasures," Tokyo National Museum, accessed April 10, 2023, https://www.tnm.jp/modules/r_exhibition/index.php?controller=hall&hid=16.
[99] NHK World-Japan, "Explore the Tokyo National Museum," January 8, 2023, documentary, https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/ondemand/video/3004927/.

Figure 15 – The Honkan of the Tokyo National Museum, designed by Jin Watanabe and opened in 1938.

Figure 16 – An *onigawara* roof tile. Detail of the roof of the Honkan.

The Tokyo National Museum plays a significant part in the preservation of national heritage, and is an important contributor to public education, as were many temple complexes before the start of the Meiji period. Thus, in a symbolical manner, the institution is a museum, a *kura*, and a temple, all in one.

LIMITATIONS IN THE CONFINES OF A MUSEUM

Despite the criticism the museum received in the early 20th century, described in the previous chapter, most of the collection of the Tokyo National Museum is still displayed using a fairly uniform method utilizing glass cases. However, the exhibits at the museum have still improved significantly when compared to their previous incarnations. Most vitrines now consist of glass panes unobstructed by frames or other disruptions. Modern lighting techniques have resolved the earlier issues of glare and reflections obscuring the artifacts on display, and have been creatively employed to present the objects under ideal lighting conditions or to highlight certain details. A few examples of this will be examined later in this chapter.

An important note is the fact that the use of these glass cases is often a necessity. Even though the Tokyo National Museum is well equipped with a modern climate control system, Japan's high humidity and extreme temperatures severely tax the objects exposed to them. The glass displays are essential for theft prevention, for protecting the objects from the touch of visitors, and from the elements from harming them. The glass cases, such as the ones used for the display of the the museum's swords, are equipped with state-of-the-art systems in order to keep them safe.[100] Additionally, some artifacts are now presented outside of glass confinements, such as larger objects and statues, which are kept safe using different techniques and technologies. Even though not all objects benefit from their presentation in a museum display from a cultural standpoint, as they are

[100] Goppion Technology developed some of the Tokyo National Museum's newest showcases in 2020. An overview of their design and installed systems can be found on their website.
"Swords of the Samurai: National Museum of Tokyo," Goppion Technology, accessed April 11, 2023, https://www.goppion.com/projects/tokyo-national-museum.

removed from their context and cultural network, and can often no longer be appreciated in their intended way, these types of presentation are often simply necessary to ensure the preservation of an object. Unfortunately, not all displays in the Tokyo National Museum have been optimized for the objects they exhibit, and the same issues discussed in chapter four still present themselves in several examples. Still, the museum is exploring new display methods and experimenting with new ways of presenting their collection.

TRADITIONS ON DISPLAY – TRADITIONS IN DISPLAY

The Tokyo National Museum has explored several ways of creating unique exhibits even within their fairly uniform display methods. Some of these techniques are subtle, but have a profound impact and important cultural meaning. For example, the Tea Ceremony exhibit in the Honkan is displayed in the same neutral glass cases which can be found throughout the museum. However, a slight tint to the backgrounds of the cases imitate the warm shades of *tatami* mat flooring and the earthen walls of a traditional *chashitsu*, invoking the impression of the environment these objects were meant to be appreciated in. Some methods used in the exhibit are less subtle, such as a historical piece of calligraphy mounted in a mock *tokonoma* alcove, effectively presenting the object the same way it would be traditionally displayed. Lighting is also employed to favorably augment the presentation of certain artifacts. Various examples of these techniques can be found in the displays containing Japanese lacquerware. These are among some of Japan's traditional objects which are generally understood to be best enjoyed under certain conditions, such as the natural light of a lantern of candle, while their aesthetic does not benefit from a well-lit environment.[101] The museum

[101] This phenomenon is described in the writings of Junichirō Tanizaki, and was popularized in the West through the translation of his 1933 essay *Inei Raisan* 陰翳礼讃, or *In Praise of Shadows*, which was first published overseas in 1977. The section on the appreciation of Japanese Lacquerware in candlelight might be an interesting read for those interested to learn more.
Junichirō Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows*, trans. Thomas Harper (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1977), 12-15.

Figure 17 – View of the glass cases displaying Japanese swords at the Tokyo National Museum.

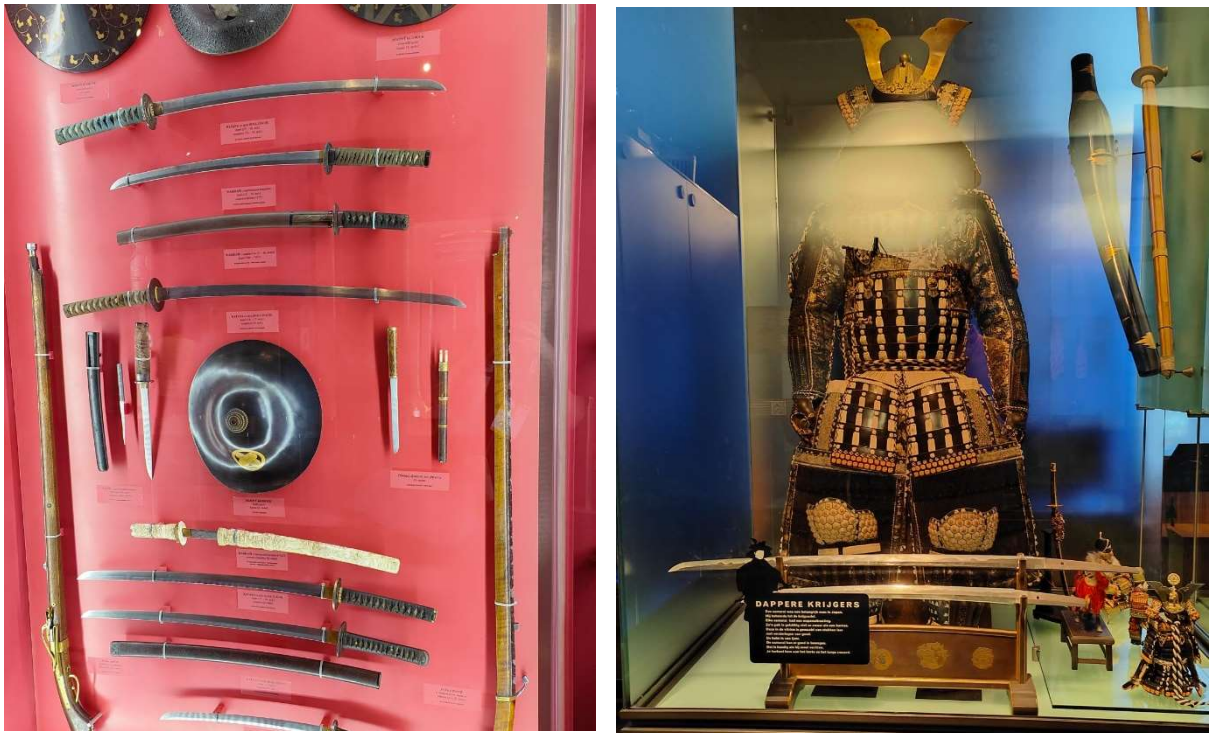

Figure 18 – Displays containing Japanese swords at the Jihomoravské muzeum ve Znojmě in Czechia (L) and the Volkenkunde Museum in the Netherlands (R).

presents nearly all of its lacquerware artifacts in darkened rooms, with soft and precisely directed light creating the optimal viewing experience for the visitor to appreciate certain details and materials.

Another example of the unique display methods of the Tokyo National Museum can be found in their exhibits containing Japanese swords (Fig. 17). These displays contain some interesting examples of cultural expression and Japanese perception, which become especially apparent when they are compared to similar displays in Western institutions (Fig. 18). Nearly all swords in the Tokyo National Museum are displayed as a naked blade, with the special trappings forming the hilt and gaurd of the sword removed. This method of display contrasts many of the exhibitions containing Japanese swords in the West. As the Japanese sword and its appearance are well understood in Japan, there is often no need to present the artifact in its material context. Additionally, Japanese audiences acknowledge the blade to be the sword itself, whereas the paraphernalia surrounding them are decorations that can be changed and replaced. This is not to say that these objects are not important or not displayed. Perhaps the most interesting detail of these exhibits however, is the way the blades are presented and positioned. The blades are placed on custom brackets which are concealed by a white piece of cloth, and each sword is slightly angled to best present the *hamon* 刃文 running along the blade, which is a distinct line in the metal often appreciated as a Japanese sword's most unique feature. The glass cases are void of other objects which could draw the eye. The presentation calls to mind the treatment of sacred objects within the context of Shinto rituals, where the color white represents purity. Western examples of similar displays often lack the same approach. The intended audience and their cultural knowlegde as presumed by the curator, as well as the information available to the museum itself, can thus have a meaningful effect on the way an object is presented.

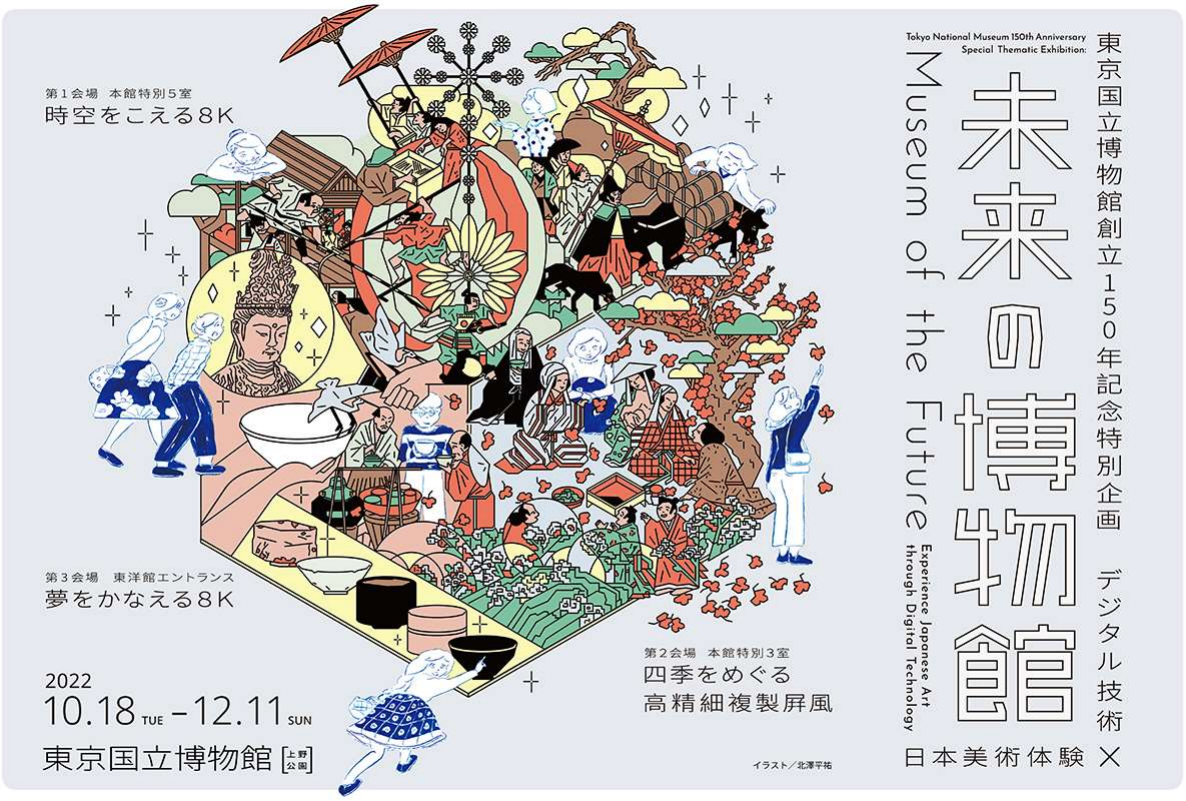

Figure 19 – Poster for the special exhibition “Museum of the Future”.

Figure 20 – Demonstration of the “A Hands on Look at Legendary Tea Bowls” installation during the NHK documentary “Explore the Tokyo National Museum”.

THE MUSEUM OF THE FUTURE

To celebrate its 150th anniversary, the Tokyo National Museum organized various several special temporary expositions and installations in 2022 and 2023. These expositions presented the museum's most valuable heirlooms, offered new ways of interacting with the museum's collection, and presented an exhibiton on the history of the institution itself. The temporary exposition *Mirai no Hakubutsukan* 未来の博物館, or "Museum of the Future", was on display from the 18th of October until December 11th in 2022 (Fig. 19). It explored the potential future directions of conservation and exposition, which are made possible through the implementation of modern technology. The exhibit featured various installations which augmented the museum experience of its visitors through the use of digital technology, such as 3d-scanning, digital modeling, and projection mapping. What makes this exhibit especially interesting, especially within the context of this thesis, is the way the utilization of these modern techniques corelate and connect to the historical exposition practices discussed in the previous chapters.

The first installation was called "The secret of the Golden Buddha of Hōryūji Temple", which presented in great detail one of the most valuable artifacts kept at the Hōryūji temple in Nara. Utilizing high quality 3D-scans made of a seventh-century statue of Kuse Kannon, the installation presents an impressive audiovisual presentation on three large screens, 4,5 meters high and 8 meters across in total. The physical statue of the Bodhisattva is 179 centimetres tall, carved from a single piece of camphor wood, and meticulously gilded with gold leaf . The artifact is quite well-preserved, and is usually kept safe in Hōryūji temple's Octagonal Yumedono, or Hall of Dreams, in order to prevent damage to the delicate statue. Public access to the sculpture is quite limited, as even viewings for the purpose of research are restricted. The 3D-scan project has not only allowed a larger audience to experience the statue, it has also allowed for new scientific observations and discoveries. In a way, this installation enacts both the traditional acts of *kaichō* and *degaichō*, as described in chapter three, simultaneously. The screens are framed by what appear to be the

wooden pillars of a temple, mirroring the place where one would visit the original statue. Furthermore, the video presentation starts with a view of the Yumedono hall, before slowly zooming in and showing an image of the cabinet the statue is kept in, opening its doors to reveal the Bodhisattva itself. The scene then shifts to panning views of the incredibly detailed 3D-model of the statue, lingering on various elements of its design with close up shots from various angles. The method of presentation invokes the feeling of a traditional *kaichō*, of having been given special permission to view the artifact and standing before it, observing each tiny detail in wondrous amazement. Simultaneously, the installation is a modern example of *degaichō*, as the statue was "transported" to the museum for a special unveiling, even though no physical artifact had been moved.

Another installation of interest in the temporary exhibit is the installation "A Hands on Look at Legendary Tea Bowls" (Fig. 20). The exhibit consists of six stark white bowls, all of a different design and each representing one of the treasured *chawan* tea bowls of the museum's national treasure collection, lined up on a shelf next to a pedestal and screen. The copies were produced with the objective of replicating the experience of holding the actual artifact, and matched the corresponding artifacts in shape, weight and texture. Visitors were invited to interact with the objects by taking them from the shelf to stand in front of the screen, while holding the copy in their hands. The screen would then display a high-quality 3D-model of the corresponding orignal artifact, which would move in turn with the physical copied version, allowing the visitor to manipulate the digital image. In this manner, it was possible to experience these objects much in the same way as during the traditional Japanese tea ceremony, for which purpose the tea bowls had been originally created. The installation allowed visitors to appreciate these museum objects in a way previously unavailable to the public, as they could observe and investigate minute details on the screen while experiencing the sensation of the physical objects in their hands. Chiori Fujita, supervisor at the National Center for the Promotion of Cultural Properties, explains the intention behind the exposition while demonstrating the installation during a documentary for the NHK, when she tells us

that “artisans created their works to be used. Half their beauty lies in the sensation of holding them. But naturally, that’s not possible in a museum, so we wanted to do the next best thing.”[102] A lot of details are lost by exhibiting objects such as these behind glass, only to be viewed from a certain angle. Although creative display methods can be employed to mitigate this issue, by means of mirrors and moving or rotating displays, the sensation of handling a physical object is not as easily replicated. This installation is a wonderful example of a modern and hybrid solution, where both a digital version, physical copy, and actual artifact are made available to the public.

We might speculate endlessly on these installations and their possible connections to Japanese traditions and historical methods of display. The section where the scenes of famous Japanese folding screens are animated through projection mapping might connect to the fashion in which these objects were appreciated in the past, or might pertain to the role these objects played in historical storytelling and entertainment. The playfulness that comes with the interactive features of the installation might allude to the fair-like atmosphere of the *misemono* and *kaichō* of a bygone era, discussed in chapter three. A more important observation however, is the attitude of the museum in regards to these modern techniques, and how they envision themselves through these installations as a “Museum of the Future”. The people and curators working on this exhibit conceived ways to, in their opinion, move toward a more culturally genuine museum, where the artifacts on display are still part of their cultural network and can be experienced in a meaningful and compelling way.

[102] NHK World-Japan, “Explore the Tokyo National Museum.”

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Whenever an objects enters the collection of a museum, it becomes removed from a meaningful framework of connections consisting of traditional, cultural, and political meanings.[103] This is a nuanced concept which is neither inherently positive or negative. However, it is important to be aware of the potential effect a museum can impose on its surrounding culture and society through the collecting and displaying of objects. While this concept has already been explored in the academic world through various observations, the similar effect Western display methods might have on already existing cultural performances and established traditional exhibitions has not been examined in the same way. As we have analyzed in this thesis, Japan had a long history of artistry, display and preservation before the introduction of the Western concept of art and the museum. The rapid Westernization of Japan during the Meiji period saw these practices transformed and altered, and in some cases made more culturally significant. One might even argue that precisely because Japan was already familiar with the existence of designated spaces for the collecting and safekeeping of precious and noteworthy items, for example a temple's *kura*, the concept of a museum was more easily accepted. However, not every culture has the same concept of sacred items as being bound to a space or being kept locked away, and thus is not as easily introduced to the idea of a museum. In reality, these situations are always amazingly more nuanced and complex. Still, the unique power relations and exchanges between Japan and the West during the Meiji period have resulted in a pattern of transculturation that is much more equitably hybrid, especially when compared to similar situations in other parts of the world with stronger and more vertical power relations. This makes the Japanese museum an especially interesting subject to study.

[103] Marstine, *New Museum Theory and Practice*, 154.

After fashioning themselves vigorously after Western examples of museums, the Japanese museum practices are now transforming once again. In this thesis, we have examined various examples of traditional Japanese display and conservation, and their evolution throughout the early modern and modern era, in order to connect them to recent developments in the Tokyo National Museum. However, the true nature of these changes, and their connection with traditional Japanese values and practices, can only become clear through continued analysis and the exploration of the museum's future direction. As is the case in most institutions, a true change in methodology and scientific approach will most likely be gradual, as curators and museum employees are educated based on current systems and our contemporary understanding the museum. Contrarily, any attempts to "return" to pure and classic traditional practices would be counterproductive, as these are no longer an authentic representation of Japan's current national identity. Instead, the new incarnation of the museum, and the new generation that shapes it, might see the creation of yet another new, hybrid form of culture.[104]

The recent developments in the Tokyo National Museum, as well as their implementations of modern technology in order to forge new connections with their collection described in the previous chapter, might contain the potential for the evolution toward a culturally universal museum institution. The incredible amount of new possibilities made available through digital tools offer the easiest solutions for most museum-related concerns and controversies, such as repatriation, restitution, and other topics much larger than the focus of this thesis. In fact, many museum would benefit from the use of new technologies to enrich their collection. But, caution must be taken as not to replace the museum experience with digital presentation in its entirety, and solutions employing new techniques without the use of digital tools will have to be developed simultaneously. Still, the development observable in the Tokyo National Museum's effort toward becoming a more culturally genuine experience might be a step in a positive direction. As each

[104] Morishita, *Empty Museum*, 20.

culture has its own values pertaining to the preservation and exposition of their cultural and material heritage, it is important to have a place for these differences in the modern museum. In conclusion, cooperation between different cultures, and cultural experimentation and exploration, are necessary in order to create new and hybrid concepts of the post-museum, and to prevent different approaches to cultural heritage from being eclipsed by the current ideas of what a museum "should be".

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By submitting this thesis, I certify that:

- ✓ this work has been drafted by me without any assistance from others (not applicable to group work);
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- ✓ I have not used sources that are not explicitly allowed by the course instructors and I have clearly referenced all sources (either from a printed source, internet or any other source) used in the work in accordance with the course requirements and the indications of the course instructors;
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I understand that any false claim in respect to this work will result in disciplinary action in accordance with university regulations and the programme regulations, and that any false claim will be reported to the Board of Examiners. Disciplinary measures can result in exclusion from the course and/or the programme.

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Date: 24-04-2023

Name: F.M. Stieber

Signature: