Imaging History: Inscribing Belief in the Nation

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A COMMISSION SPONSORED BY THE MEIJI GOVERNMENT and headed by Okakura Tenshin (Kakuzō), Kanō Tessai, and Ernest F. Fenollosa traveled to Nara Prefecture in 1884 to catalog the important artifacts in temples and shrines. Fenollosa's later description of an event of this trip, which is often presented to show how he with the assistance of Okakura "saved" Japanese art, brings out the major argument of my article: the role of fine art in the formulation of belief in the nation. Fenollosa describes his "discovery" of the Guze Kannon (Goddess of Mercy), a seventh-century gilt-wood sculpture, at the Hōryūji temple:

> I had credentials from the central government which enabled me to requisition the opening of godowns and shrines. The central space of the octagonal Yumedono was occupied by a great closed shrine, which ascended like a pillar towards the apex. The priests of the Horiuji confessed that tradition ascribed the contents of the shrine to Corean work of the days of Suiko, but that it had not been opened for more than two hundred years. On fire with the prospect of such a unique treasure, we urged the priests to open it by every argument at our command. They resisted long, alleging that in punishment for the sacrilege an earthquake might well destroy the temple. Finally we prevailed, and I shall never forget our feelings as the long disused key rattled in the rusty lock. Within the shrine appeared a tall mass closely wrapped about in swathing bands of cotton cloth, upon which the dust of ages had gathered. It was no light task to unwrap the contents, some 500 yards of cloth having been used, and our eyes and nostrils were in danger of being choked with the pungent dust. . . .
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> But it was the aesthetic wonders of this work that attracted us most. From the front the figure is not quite so noble, but seen in profile it seemed to rise to the height of archaic Greek art. . . . But the finest feature was the profile view

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This article was stimulated by a rather odd request—but one for which I am grateful—that my object of study be something tangible for the conference on Public Memory and Collective Identity at Rutgers University, March 16–17, 1990. Seed money for what emerged was provided by the Higgins School of Humanities at Clark University, and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities provided time for research and writing. I benefited from the comments of the participants of the New England Japan Seminar and the Southern California Japan Seminar; and I must acknowledge Stanley Abe, Ellen Conant, Christine Guth, and Elizabeth Swinton for their patient and judicious comments on my sojourn into discourses of art history.

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> of the head, with its sharp Han nose, its straight clear forehead, and its rather large—almost negroid—lips, on which a quiet mysterious smile played, not unlike Da Vinci's Mona Lisa's. Recalling the archaic stiffness of Egyptian Art at its finest, it appeared still finer in the sharpness and individuality of the cutting. In slimness it was like a Gothic statue from Amiens, but far more peaceful and unified in its single systems of lines.
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> (Fenollosa 1911:I:50–51)

Fenollosa's account brings out a problematic especially evident in the process of nation-state formation in non-Western societies. Aesthetics—primarily art and ethics—is not something "cultural" that exists separate from temporal and spatial constructions of the nation-state; rather it helps construct a certain belief in the ideals and goals of that politico-cultural unit (see, for example, Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, and Berlin 1980). As such, it is complicit with modernity. Our tendency to treat aesthetics as traditional, romantic, even backward, elides a fundamental contradiction that confronts non-Western cultures as they form nation-states: the building of a modern society requires that non-Western places forget their past in favor of alien (modern) institutions and ideas, yet that past must be celebrated to establish the commonality and goals of the nation-state as an organism distinct from others.[1] The elision occurs in the reconstitution of the past according to a different epistemology and centralized authority that guide the rearrangement of time and space from a community-centered social organization to an abstract notion that objectifies the components as parts of a rational order. In Fenollosa's description, the nation becomes the unit of analysis for describing societies according to an abstract, universalistic, and temporal standard, i.e., progress; and second, the authority of the state is seen as the institution (now centralized) best able to make rational decisions for and bound the whole, the nation-state. The following critique of the change from the lunar to the Gregorian calendar in 1873 illustrates the displacement brought on by the new temporal order:

> Why has the government suddenly decided to abolish it? The whole thing is disagreeable. The old system corresponded to the seasons, the weather, and the movement of the tides. One could plan one's work, one's clothing, and virtually everything else by it. Since the revision the New Year and Obon [the Buddhist festival of the dead] come at crazy times. The cherry trees bloom in the sixth and seventh months, and the summer storms come in the tenth. In the fourth and fifth months, snow and frost are still on the ground. . . . Nothing is the way it should be.
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> (Quoted in Hane 1982:63)

Fenollosa's account indicates the emplotment of the visual past in this transition—from the magic of the icon hidden in its vault to the sculpture as an art object that is one element in an abstract historical narrative of the nation.

The objectification brought on by such an abstract conceptual system, as well as its foreignness, facilitates an alienation of individuals to modern society. The rational organization of society demanded by modernity calls into question the validity

[1]Berlin describes the nation-state as "the belief in the overriding need to belong to a nation; in the organic relationships of all the elements that constitute a nation; in the value of our own simply because it is ours; and, finally, faced by rival contenders for authority or loyalty, in the supremacy of its claims. These ingredients, in varying degrees and proportions, are to be found in all the rapidly growing nationalist ideologies which at present proliferate on the earth" (1980:345).

contemporary concerns (Conant 1990). Fenollosa's description of the Kannon is part of the codification of Japanese art to create what Latour calls an "optical consistency" in line with the re-writing of history (or selection of what is seen), and the organization of society into a nation-state (the goal).

II

It is common knowledge that Japanese intellectual and political leaders after the Meiji Restoration debated the nature and future form of the new nation and that the far-ranging debates indicate an early infatuation with the West with a corresponding elision of the immediate past. From as early as the Iwakura mission to the United States and Europe (1871–73), Meiji leaders saw art as an important component to reinscribe Japan's past, thereby establishing the nation's subjectivity as it modernized (Mayo 1973, and Soviak 1971:24–26). But the exact nature and role of art was contested. (See Cohen 1992, esp. chaps. 1 and 2 for different notions of Japanese art among early American collectors.) The perceived need to define or determine what art is and is not—not an issue in earlier periods—indicates Japan's acceptance of Western notions of art. Indeed, it is only with the presence of *yōga* (Western art) that a *nihonga* (Japanese art) emerges (see, for example, Karatani [1988]1993). Prior to the late nineteenth century, there was less a notion of a "Japanese art" than representations of visual beauty, such as paintings by artists who belonged to different schools, such as the Tosa, Yamato-e, Kanō, etc., silk kimonos, lacquerware, poetry and prose, etc. Art, of course, is not Western in origin but collecting, cataloguing, and display is (Clifford 1989).

The ambiguity of what constituted art in Meiji Japan is evident during the early decades. Initially, art was promoted for its utilitarian value: on the one hand, the production and sale of Orientalia was a source of much-needed capital for the new state; on the other hand, art was important to generate symbols of change—architecture, money, and stamps. Complaints of artists such as Hōgai of having to work in factories generating export objects are indicative of the importance the government placed on art as an object of trade rather than on his genre of paintings. Specialists from Europe and the United States, such as Antonio Fontanesi (painting), Eduardo Chiossone (printmaking), and Josiah Conder (architecture) were hired to teach Western art and architecture at the Technical Art School (*Kōbu bijutsu gakkō*). The results of these specialists are impressive, but overshadowed (see Conant 1990).

But with Japanese intellectuals' discovery that Western knowledge is not universal and that "world history" is indeed particularistic, art as a utilitarian form lost favor to a notion of art as an expression of a universal ideal equally applicable to West and East. Institutionally, this change occurred as the government closed the Technical Art School and then established the Tokyo School of Fine Art (*Tokyo bijutsu gakkō*) in 1888. The emergence of this school, a victory for Kuki Ryūichi, Okakura, and Fenollosa, institutionalized the idea of art as an expression of cultural heritage.

Most recent scholars have described this struggle as the confrontation of East and West, tradition and modernity; while this is one aspect of this encounter, such a bifurcation overlooks a crucial problematic, how does one present a universal through the particular. It is a mistake to consider, ipso facto, the use of one's past as traditional and backward. To ignore or define pasts qua tradition as impeding modernity denies a nation the ability to construct a nation-state. For example, Okakura was well

> the letters and sciences, technology, religion, customs, etc. In such times is there a reason that only art stands aloof and is not affected?
>
> (Okakura 1939:2)

These differences bring out the different emplotments of time, especially its orientational function, in modern society. Time is a part of the new, abstract laws based on nature and science that have been used to organize society. Though constructed by humans, these laws claim a transcendent, universalistic quality and remain beyond criticism, yet guide and order society. Norbert Elias states, "The mechanical apparatus of the station clock that is constantly moving in a specific way, transmits an institutionalized visual message to each person who is able to connect these sight patterns with the correct memory pattern. Finally, the orientation function of time is combined with a further function, that of a means of regulating human behaviour and feeling" (Elias 1992:34–35). Visual arts when presented temporally, too, provide objectivistic data to describe a nation's social and ethical nature in relation to various temporal schemes (see, for example, Preziosi 1992). Yet those temporal schemes that are connected to sight patterns differ. A difference between Okakura and Fenollosa was how Japan was to be located in its expanded realm, as the past of Europe (world history) or as a national unit, with an autonomous past, present, and future.

Various symbols can be used in this reorganization of society; art, now arranged into a historical narrative presents key moments of Japan's cultural development and serves as another orientational tool. Like Elias's clock, art as a historical narrative can also connect those sights with correct memory patterns; its orientational function is to transmit an institutionalized visual message, that of the national history of Japan and its essential cultural characteristics. The latter, which suggests proper (or Japanese) feelings and behavior, is regulative. This function of art for the nation-state was expressed by an art historian in the 1930s: "These two men [Okakura and Fenollosa] are regarded as the fathers of the new school of Japanese painting, in the sense that through their efforts the aristocratic Kanō school as well as the peculiarly philosophical Chinese school were converted into a new form easy to understand even for men living in that changing and rather uncouth age" (Dan 1931:124).

But whereas time facilitates the objectification and fragmentation of society—the emplotment of components into orderly slots—art can present the unity of human activity. A countertrend to the competition, atomization, alienation, and mechanization of modernity emerged in late eighteenth-century Europe and is best exemplified by Johannes Herder. For Herder, "human life was seen as having a unity rather analogous to that of a work of art, where every part or aspect only found its proper meaning in relation to all others" (Taylor 1979:1–2). Three Japanese who discovered aesthetics as an expression of nation—Inoue Tetsujirō, Miyake Setsurei, and Okakura—learned of some of these ideas, as expounded on by Hegel, from Fenollosa who, as a recent graduate of Harvard, went to Japan to teach philosophy. Okakura, for example, writes:

> The nineteenth century is truly an era of great transformation of the world; there are many reasons, but the principal driving force is materialism. Things that are not material, even religions that are based on lofty abstractions and art that is not realistic, cannot fit in this world. . . . this trend has proceeded incessantly; the progress of a mechanistic scholarship has produced mechanistic thought, and that thought has even affected religions and ethics. . . . Even in literature, it has produced

the appreciation of ancient Japanese art, took official trips to catalog and register ancient artifacts, were instrumental in ordering objects into a historical chronology, sat on various governmental commissions and review boards, and directed the most prestigious art institution, the Tokyo School of Fine Art, and the Art department of the Imperial Museum.

Okakura and Fenollosa were involved throughout most of the process of selection, codification, and institutionalization of what has become known as Japanese art. The result is what Hochberg calls a map, a conceptual system by which people could encode their experience (Hochberg 1972:63–66). This map, however, is not that of Okakura and Fenollosa, for the sociocultural milieu facilitated its production. They had key government support from officials like Kuki; help from the hundreds of anonymous commoners and priests who prevented the destruction of Buddhist objects that resulted from the policy of separation of Buddhism and Shintō; willing artists; and an audience in the West eager to see the Oriental past preserved. In other words, the map that was encoded was the experience of many. This map is arranged in two ways: the ordering of art objects into a historical narrative of Japanese development, and the reduction of genres to those closest to the defined "essence."

The objects selected and now deemed national treasures construct a historical narrative that depicts the achievement of that spiritual ideal. Okakura organized art in the following chronology:

> We can indicate that rise and fall linearly. In other words, following the above chart, gradually from the protohistoric period, we ascended in the Suiko period and directly progressed through Tenji to the prosperity of Tenpei. And then we declined, rose during Kūkai and again in Kanaoka, declined a little during Genpei, but rose again during Kamakura. In the Ashikaga we reached the prosperity of Higashiyama and experienced the short Toyotomi period; then the Genroku [period], the antithesis to the Toyotomi, emerged, turned to the Tenmei and finally continued to today.
>
> (Okakura 1939:16)

This chronology corresponds to the three periods in Hegel's notion of aesthetics: a movement from the Symbolic, where the actualization of the Idea is no more than a "*mere search* [italics sic] for portrayal" (for Hegel, the "pantheistic cultures of the East" best represented this level); to the Classical stage, best exemplified by the art of Greece and Rome; and finally to the Romantic stage (Europe) where a recognition of the inwardness of self-consciousness leads to the perfection of the heart and spirit (Hegel 1975:I:76,77). Hegel provided a way for Okakura to claim Japan's equivalence with the West: that Japan, too, had been developing the spirit that "ennobles mankind." Even though Hegel's framework is quite evident, Okakura did not seek to locate art within a history of art of the world, but to use that formula to establish a history of Japanese art.

Okakura began his historical narrative—as do most histories—in the vague and mystical world of protohistory. Here, primitiveness allowed him to establish the beginning from which progress would be measured and also to make claims to immanence; the beginning—as is often the case—was the same as the goal. Okakura merged art, the archipelago, and Japan in this origin. The archipelago, he asserted, is quite hospitable to the development of art: it is cold in the dry north and temperate in the south; it is surrounded by the ocean, the climate is mild, there is seasonal change, and the mountains and waters are picturesque. He concludes, "If art does not arise from this island country, there is no place that can produce art" (Okakura

conflated the first two of three stages—art, religion, philosophy—of Hegel's notion of human realization of the absolute spirit. But even though Okakura specifically denied an intrinsic connection between Buddhism and art, he did find in Buddhist sculpture an expression of the unity of spirit and man. By conflating the two, Okakura blurs the careful distinction Hegel made to separate ontology from religions and would leave himself open to accusations of Romanticism or ultranationalism (Notehelfer 1990). Thus when Okakura states, "If one summarizes the special features of the art of the Tenpyō period it is idealism, the height of which has not again been achieved in any period of Japanese art since," he finds that the Idea, the presentation of the spirit in sensuous form, is best expressed in the Buddhist statues of the Nara era (Okakura 1939:96). Examples of this spirit could be found in the Buddhist temples around Nara: the trinity in the lecture hall of the Yakushiji, the bronze Buddha of the Kanimanji, the bronze Kannon of the Tōindo (east hall) of the Yakushiji, two statues, Nikko and Gakko of the Kōfukuji, the four kings of the Kaidanin, and Bonten and Taishakuten of the Sangatsudō. The majesty (*sōrei*) of these sculptures exhibits the achievement of the spirit (lit: miraculous [*reimyō*]) (Okakura 1939:80–87).

The next era, the Heian,[6] was not particularly noted for the production of great art; instead, Okakura describes it as a period of assimilation and Japanization of imported culture. The art is noted for its elegance (*yūbi*) and virility (*gōken*) that express the spirit of this era. As an expression of the unity of society, Okakura connects the rise and fall of art to that of society:

> Social change is not straight-forward. There are certainly many conditions entangled in it. Because this change is a type of organism, when development stops there is certainly decay. . . . Thus, the law [that governs the] rise and fall of art [is that] development continues when there is a spiritual richness that nourishes it; when the pinnacle is reached spiritual activity wanes, it becomes only form. And when form prevails, it declines.
>
> (Okakura 1939:128)

Thus the beginning of the era sees the continued decline of art from the late Tenpyō that coincides with a decline in the moral spirit of the period. Okakura noted that despite this decline in spirit, art of this period was still far superior to that of contemporary Japan (1939:100). As evidence of this decline, Okakura cited the rise of the Fujiwara, which spurred a diffusion of art from religious institutions to the nobility; the emphasis on appearance—for example, the elaborate dress of men and women; the rise of manors, which contributed to the fragmentation of society; and the growing political power of religious institutions whose interest shifted from teachings to power. The period did have its moments; the return of Kūkai in the ninth century and the Zen monks during the Kamakura period provided important new ideas for further development of Japanese art.

While he considered the art of Heian, styles such as Yamato-e and Tosa, important in the history of Japanese art, Okakura was not particularly fond of either. Indeed, his interpretation might be seen as a metaphor for contemporary society in which he criticized a tendency toward form without spirit or inner understanding. For example, he criticized the Tosa school as all form and no spirit, while the Yamato-e which he describes as heroic (*yūgō*), and openhearted (*sotchoku*) was merely

[6] He divided the Heian era into the Kūkai (781–859), Fujiwara (859–1190), and Kamakura (1190–1394) periods.

between past and present. History is the cumulation of individual actions that cannot be fully recounted, only learned from. It is always partial: "We cannot know the prosperous times of the art of Fujiwara; however, we benefit from the Fujiwara style" (Okakura 1939:1). In this way, the history of art is a part of all Japanese, and not only useful in producing and maintaining culture, but also the means for revitalizing Japan's Asiatic past—the spirit that was evident in the arts.

The aggregate of objects presents the universal, the Idea or spirit. As such, it is timeless. Okakura writes, "The very individuality of Art, which makes its problem so subjective to the artist, at the same time makes it defy classification in time" (Okakura [1904]1922:181). Okakura wrote that art is the best source to understand that spirit; it transcends the phenomenal and is the closest representation of a universal human spirit. He states, "Nothing is more hallowing than the union of kindred spirits in art. At the moment of meeting, the art lover transcends himself. At once he is and is not. He catches a glimpse of Infinity, but words cannot voice his delight, for the eye has no tongue. Freed from the fetters of matter, his spirit moves in the rhythm of things. It is thus that art becomes akin to religion and ennobles mankind" (Okakura [1906]1956:81–82). The images and artists that Okakura singled out filled out his version of the Hegelian spirit. For him as for Hegel, paintings represent a higher level of man's attempt to express spirit. While sculpture expresses the spirit in human form, paintings, poetry, and music present the spirit as an abstract visible (Taylor 1975:478). Paintings are more inward and "see" the spirit as a broader field; Okakura thus verged on contradicting himself when he distinguished between religion and religiosity. "Art is a religion in itself. The mere fact of painting a holy subject does not constitute the holiness of the picture. The inherent nobleness and devotional attitude of the artist's mind toward the universe, alone stamp him as the religious painter" (Okakura [1904]1922:191).

This is one of the keys of mobilization of belief of a nation-state: the inscription of belief in such a way that it is difficult to challenge the part. Latour states, "In sum, you have to invent objects which have the properties of being *mobile* but also *immutable, presentable, readable* and *combinable* with one another" (Latour 1986:7). To question the validity of a piece of the narrative as art would question both the historicity and essence of Japan. The art that Okakura and Fenollosa selected was that which represented Japan's spiritual and ethical past. Okakura writes:

> The strange tenacity of the race, nurtured in the shadow of a sovereignty unbroken from its beginning, that very tenacity which preserves the Chinese and Indian ideals in all their purity amongst us, even where they were long since cast away by the hands that created them, that tenacity which delights in the delicacy of Fujiwara culture, and revels at the same time in the martial ardour of Kamakura, which tolerates the gorgeous pageantry of Toyotomi, even while it loves the austere purity of the Ashikagas, holds Japan to-day intact, in spite of this sudden incomprehensible influx of Western ideas. To remain true to herself, notwithstanding the new colour which the life of a modern nation forces her to assume, is, naturally, the fundamental imperative of that Adwaita idea to which she was trained by her ancestors.
>
> (Okakura [1903]1970:222–23)

This universal is vague; it is a spirit that transcends history and expresses itself through the particular.[8] Art—depicted chronologically—is a concrete medium that

[8] A hint at the transcendent quality of art is evident in Okakura's definition of the Adwaita ideal: "this ideal is the state of not being two, and is the name applied to the great Indian doctrine that all which exists, though apparently manifold, is really one" (Okakura [1903]1970:235).

in Noma Seiroku's two-volume history of Japanese art. A sense of Japaneseness is evident in his description of the Kudara Kannon at the Hōryūji:

> The elongation of the face reflects the proportions of this uniquely tall statue, and the expression is gentle, almost maternal in spirit. The sinuous tresses of hair falling onto the shoulder strengthen this effect, and yet they, like the eyes or lips, are quite schematic and abstract in form. The flaking paint surface and cracks in the lacquer have not been repaired, for the patina of age is esteemed by those who respect the integrity of an object and the ways in which time transfigures it. The crown of openwork bronze was originally gilded, and it bears a small engraved image of the Buddha Amita-bha above the central jewel.
>
> (Noma 1967:I:48)

The Kannon is historical in that it looks old and, if people bother to read the caption, is located in the Nara era. But the caption also combines those characteristics peculiar to later eras; it is meditative, elegant, refined, simple, and, above all, has spirit.

In a description of a wooden bodhisattva of the Tōshōdaiji, the themes of spirit and antiquity embodied within the beauty of sculpture remain, but reverence for the "patina of age" indicates a choice to display the separation of the object from the present:

> The combination of swelling volume with brooding, austere energy reflects new criteria of beauty in the arts which began to appear at the very end of the Nara period. The image was originally coated with thin plaster and painted, but the flaking away of the paint has revealed a beauty in the carving which surpasses that of color.
>
> (Noma 1967:I:73)

These images bring out the importance of art to the history of a nation; art is one medium that is molded to create, maintain, and reproduce a specific cultural vision. This occurs in two ways. Artists produce images, not only for the sake of creating beautiful things, but to re-present particular images of what society is and should (or should not) be (see, for example, Barnes and Melion 1989). But in more recent times, experts—historians, art historians, critics, etc.—have categorized those pieces to give meaning through a narrative of those pasts. "New criteria of beauty" indicates the emplotment of these artifacts into prefigured categories that identify their significance and relation to a history (Price 1989:22). Such narration is a cultural elaboration, one that is active—it both produces and restricts (Bhabha 1990).

There are clearly choices made in the presentation of these statues. Indeed, this is alluded to through a presentation of objectivity and expertise; "those who respect the integrity" are those who know and decide the meaning, worth, and nature of display. Both statements present art as a medium that allows us to feel and experience the ideals of a Japanese antiquity. But it is not the experience of those of the seventh and eighth centuries who viewed the statues when completed. The preservation is not a restoration that shows the original as sculpted, but depends on our knowledge of what the artist should have presented. The "beauty . . . which surpasses that of color" presents the monochromatic, refined simplicity as if it is timeless and natural; it ignores a clear break in taste from the colorful to the monochromatic around the sixteenth century (Izutsu and Izutsu 1981:46–47). A second issue of the presentation, which will be discussed below, is the way images suggest spatial configurations; the emphasis on Japan's early religiosity turns us away from Japan's continental

its proximate relations, not from that of Japan or its heavenly creators unless Japan's early society be tied to Korea. Like the use of architecture in the Renaissance, visualization was important to maintaining its significance where "The effects of viewing magical shapes on the observer's memory and imagination was considered an important element in directing the heavenly forces" (Sack 1980:161).

In contrast, Fenollosa's place was a Japan as a part of the world, i.e., Europe. He could make claims to have discovered an object that existed for a millennia, was known about by local residents, and protected by the priests because he emploted it in a way understandable to those in the West. In this sense, the visual allows for the construction of distinctiveness. Fenollosa's description of the Kannon presents this new spatial configuration: Fenollosa speculates on the connection to Greek aesthetics, compares it to Da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* and Egyptian art, and finds Han Chinese influences. But the emplotment of aesthetics within a framework of progress does not necessarily lead to the loss of particularity, instead, it reinforces it. This raises the difference between Fenollosa and Okakura; one must ask, whose definition of difference? The subjectivity here is in the voice of the speaker. For the former, Japan's art was important in constructing a history of Asian art within his Hegelian framework. But while Okakura placed that art in a similar developmental framework, he did not accept the locus provided by the West. Okakura's narrative is sprinkled with comparisons—within the same Hegelian stages—with European art, which serve, not as like or similar types, but comparisons to show that Japan's art is different, i.e., better. The essence and characteristics of Japanese art serve as boundaries to separate Japanese culture from others.

In this way Fenollosa (or Okakura) did rescue Japanese art, but in a form with a quite different meaning than prior to the Meiji Restoration. The destruction of Buddhist statues and objects was less a destruction of art objects than the elimination of icons and objects that reminded people of the power and influence of a sociopolitical institution that was now stripped of much of its power (Grapard 1984; Hardacre 1989; Ketelaar 1990). The statues revived as art still possessed a spirituality, but now it is as an object that presents a national meaning, one that is intimately tied to Japan's—and consequently *tōyō*'s—history.

This reordering of the archives of Japan's past into a different spatial order can be illustrated by contrasting it to a 1880 series of photoessays, *Kokka Yohō* (Glories of the nation) (Tokunō 1880). The title is instructive: the characters for *kokka* are those for country (*kuni*) and brilliance (*ka*) (not family, which combines to the more familiar nation-state); *yohō* suggests continuity. The author states:

> It is a principle of nature [that works] when we see nobility in the ruggedness of mountain peaks and get a desire to study the flowing rivers and bays. More important, because we contact the spirit of ancient people in various books, pictures, and artifacts, when we come into contact and are edified, we will understand those secrets and miracles. In a country like ours, with an unbroken imperial line, we should honor more those artifacts which still exist. Last year upon orders, I visited each prefecture and inspected books, paintings, and artifacts in the imperial treasuries, shrines, temples, and homes of samurai and merchants. I, an observer 1,100 years later, could not help but be inspired by the exquisite and elaborate details, the bequest of sages and philosophers, and products of expert artisans. . . . I have tried to animate the spirit of the ancients for [those of] the present. . . . I hope [the volumes] spread throughout the public and become a tool that nurtures the principles of patriotism, and most of all, augment (*hiho*) civilization.

the foundation for the categories of Japanese art history (Yashiro 1987). For Okakura, art served as an expressivist form that was essential to establishing the unity of the nation-state, as well as ensuring its progress. He argued that the secret to Japan's future is in a spirit of renewal found in art: "We know instinctively that in our history lies the secret of our future, and we grope with a blind intensity to find the clue. But if the thought be true, if there be indeed any spring of renewal hidden in our past, we must admit that it needs at this moment some mighty reinforcement, for the scorching drought of modern vulgarity is parching the throat of life and art" (Okakura [1903]1970:243–44).

This suggests a reason for its persistence. Terry Eagleton asserts that the importance and persistence of aesthetics in modern thought

> springs from the progressively abstract, technical nature of modern European thought. In this rarefied context, art would still appear to speak of the human and the concrete, providing us with a welcome respite from the alienating rigours of other more specialized discourses, and offering, at the heart of this great explosion and division of knowledges, a residually common world.
>
> (Eagleton 1990:2)

The abstractness of modernity is mechanistic and alienating, and fosters an uncertainty of what progress will bring. This was obviously important to Meiji Japanese who had to deal with both societal transformation and change toward something perceived to be foreign. Modernity and foreignness are not necessarily the same, but attributing uncertainty to the outside is a powerful ideological tool. In fostering modernity, Japanese intellectuals used this potential of aesthetics to retain the human and concrete by extracting images, icons, and ethics from antiquity; the expressive became *ours* in contrast to the *theirs* of modernity. That this problem also preoccupied numerous philosophers in Europe and that the basis of this expressivism is similar to Herder and Hegel has been lost amid the bodhisattvas and ink-brush paintings.

Aesthetics in modern Japan has played a similar role to that of an anthropologist longing for his/her lost village (see, for example, Rosaldo 1989); but in the case of art, there are tangible objects that the scholar can preserve, catalogue, display, and analyze as if those objects are timeless, thus real. This is its seduction, the use of the particular to present cultural timelessness. Art serves as the archives from which Japanese have constructed an objectivistic and unchanging narrative of their past, a history that celebrates their uniqueness and corrects the baneful effects of modernity. For the West, Japanese art represents that lost primitive era, an early stage in our development that is forever lost, but at least can be enjoyed through the Oriental paintings and statues that serve as metonyms of that lost age. Both Western and Japanese narratives reinforce each others' construction of themselves.

Again a note of caution is in order. We must not conflate a rhetorical position located in the past with categorical slots that we might use in our analyses of processes of cultural change. Okakura's purpose was not the revival of Japan's past against modernity; he sought to propose a nation-state that maintained a unity lacking in the utilitarian ideas derived from Guizot or Buckle. He did divide Japan's response to the West into two groups, conservative and progressive. He caricaturized the progressive as one who believes in complete acceptance of Western culture because Eastern civilization is at a lower level of development; the greater the assimilation, the higher Japan goes up the scale. In contrast, the conservative neither despises Asiatic civilization nor holds Western society as a paragon. Okakura called for a homogeneity of civilization that "must be the result of a realization from within"

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