

PRELIMINARY VERSION – DO NOT QUOTE

Japanese School Exhibits and European Perceptions of Japanese Education at World Exhibitions in the Late Nineteenth Century, 1876-1904

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INTRODUCTION

The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations took place in London in 1851.¹

This was the first of a series of great international exhibition which were to follow throughout the second half of the nineteenth century until the First World War.² They were called world exhibitions in British English, world's fairs in American English, *Expositions universelles* in French, *Weltausstellungen* in German and *bankoku hakurankai* in Japanese. Most of them took place in France and the United States. They were showcases of industrial society. They were arenas where the “civilised nations”, to use the language of the time, staged their accomplishments. Those who were not civilised could not represent themselves but were put on display in anthropological exhibits. With the years the entertainment aspect gained more and more importance. Nevertheless, world exhibitions had the ambition to resemble the entire contemporary knowledge in an encyclopaedic and well classified way.

In this perspective it is not surprising that education was a central theme at the exhibitions. From 1862 onwards world exhibitions comprised important educational sections. The exhibitions featured all kinds of education from the kindergarten to the universities and sciences. Three fields, however, dominated the educational sections of world exhibitions.

¹ I am thanking Ho Sana (Michigan State University) for her help in translating Japanese documents.

² On world exhibitions in general see GREENHALGH, Paul, *Ephemeral vistas: the Expositions universelles, great exhibitions and world's fairs, 1851-1939*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1988; SCHROEDER-GUDEHUS, Brigitte, RASMUSSEN, Anne, *Les fastes du progrès: le guide des expositions universelles, 1851-1992*, Paris, Flammarion, 1992.

Firstly, throughout the world, primary education became a state affair and was made compulsory. Secondly, technical education was used more and more to prepare youth for careers in industry.³ Thirdly, higher education saw an expansion and diversification process. Over the years the educational sections became continuously larger. On some occasions education headed the classification schemes.

The Japanese eagerly participated in world exhibitions. In 1862 the British ambassador to Japan, Rutherford Alcock, arranged a display of Japanese products. Five years later, independent Tokugawa and Satsuma displays in Paris struggled about the legitimate character of the first genuinely Japanese exhibit. From 1873 onwards the new regime regularly participated in the exhibitions, investing considerable resources. Alongside the United States and France, Japan was one of the most active participants in the educational sections.⁴

Japanese education saw a remarkable development throughout the last decades of the nineteenth century, resulting in the institutionalisation of a new system of education in Meiji Japan.⁵ Education was usually one of the major parts of Japanese exhibits. The relatively young officials and education experts made significant efforts to attend the exhibitions. This paper is thus a contribution to a socio-cultural history of education experts in a period of early globalisation.

Why did these experts and officials frequent the exhibitions? Participation in international exhibitions required them to leave the archipelago. It involved by necessity border-crossing and had thus a transnational dimension. Why did they go transnational? I would argue that

³ LUNDGREEN, Peter, « Engineering Education in Europe and the USA, 1750-1930: The Rise to Dominance of School Culture and the Engineering Professions », in: *Annals of Science*, 47, 1, 1990, p. 33-75.

⁴ CONANT, Ellen P., « Refractions of the Rising Sun: Japan's Participation in International Exhibitions, 1862-1910 », in: SATO, Tomoko, WATANABE, Toshio (eds), *Japan and Britain: an aesthetic dialogue 1850-1930*, London, Lund Humphries in association with the Barbican Art Gallery and Setagaya Art Museum, 1991, p. 79-92; HARRIS, Neil, « All the World a Melting Pot? Japan at American Fairs, 1876-1904 », in: IRIYE, Akira (ed.), *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1975, p. 24-54; LOCKYER, Angus, *Japan at the Exhibition, 1867-1970*, PhD dissertation, Stanford University, 2000.

⁵ For a recent synthesis see DUKE, Benjamin C., *The History of Modern Japanese Education: Constructing the National School System, 1872-1890*, New Brunswick, Rutgers University Press, 2009.

they went transnational for two reasons. On the one hand they wanted to learn from abroad. On the other hand they used the exhibitions they wanted to represent to the world the performance and alleged superiority of Japanese education. The exhibitions played indeed a major role for the international circulation of educational knowledge.⁶ Alongside other media, they fostered the transformation of Japan. Government missions were sent to foreign countries. Students were sent to American normal schools. Foreigners were invited as teachers and experts. Foreign books were imported and translated. As meta-media world exhibitions brought together existing means of communication and added a new aspect.⁷

The participation of Japanese education at world exhibitions of the nineteenth century has been well analysed by historians. How European education experts perceived the Japanese exhibits has not yet been the object of a scientific analysis. Ishizuki Minoru discussed the views of Europeans and Americans who have stayed in Japan of the early Meiji period.⁸ These observers perceived Japan under many respects as a children's paradise. Most judged the institutional reforms of the early 1870s as exaggerated and potentially harmful westernization. In this paper the focus will be on education experts who had never put their feet on the Japanese archipelago.

This paper is based on reports that European education experts wrote in the aftermath of their visits to world exhibitions. These reports were written after the closure of the exhibitions by individuals who had never come to Japan. The research is limited to European, more exactly French and German, sources. The time frame for this paper goes from 1876 when the Japanese send a mission to a world exhibition to study its educational displays to 1904, the

⁶ See for example FUCHS, Eckhardt, in: « Gouvernentaler Internationalismus und Bildung: Deutschland und die USA am Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts », in: SCHRIEWER, Jürgen, *Weltkultur und kulturelle Bedeutungswelten: Zur Globalisierung von Bildungsdiskursen*, Frankfurt am Main, Campus, 2007, p. 45-73.

⁷ On world exhibitions as meta-media see GEPPERT, Alexander C. T., « Città brevi: storia, storiografia e teoria delle pratiche espositive europee, 1851-2000 », in: *Memoria e Ricerca*, 17, 2004, p. 7-18, here p. 13.

⁸ ISHIZUKI, Minoru, « Gaikokujin no mita Nihon no kyōiku », in: SAKATA, Yoshio, *Seikaishi no nakano Meiji ishin*, Kyōto, Kyōto Daigaku, 1973, p. 199-230. See also more generally ISHIZUKI, Minoru, *Sekai to Deau Nihon no Kyōiku*, Tōkyō, Kyōiku Kaihatsu Kenkyusho, 1992.

last participation before the First World War. This paper focuses on the world exhibitions of first order, although the Japanese Ministry of Education also presented itself at smaller exhibitions. Despite their smaller scale, the exhibitions of London and New Orleans have been integrated.

Although discussing the specialised theme of education, this paper makes a contribution to more general research on the foreign perception of Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. One of the big questions was if European observers perceived Japan and their Japanese colleagues as equals or inferiors. Research has shown European and American racial discourses on Japan, in particular the narrative on the “yellow peril”.⁹

At the beginning of this paper I will analyse what drove Japanese education experts to go transnational at the world exhibitions. The first part discusses how Japanese actors used exhibitions in order to get in contact with American and European education. The second part then analyses how the Japanese represented their own institutions at the exhibitions. Subsequently, in the main part I will discuss how European observers perceived the Japanese educational exhibits and thus Japanese education.

I. LEARNING FROM THE UNITED STATES – EXHIBITIONS AS VEHICLES FOR APPROPRIATIONS

After the Meiji restoration of 1868 education became a priority for Japan’s new political leaders. The Ministry of Education, *monbushō*, was established in 1871. Authority was centralised in Tokyo, bringing autonomous regional modernisation efforts to an end. The Educational Order (*gakusei*) of August 1872 formally established a comprehensive education system. Japan was divided into numerous school districts. Elementary schooling became compulsory for all children, independently of their social origin. One of the problems of

⁹ KOWNER, Rotem, « ‘Lighter than Yellow, but not Enough’: Western Discourse on the Japanese ‘Race’, 1854-1904 », in: *Historical Journal*, 43, 1, 2000, p. 103-131; SCHWENTKER, Wolfgang, « The “Yellow Peril” Reconsidered. Western Perceptions of Asia in the Age of Imperialism », in: BROWN, Cedric (ed.), *Cultural Negotiations – Sichtweisen des Anderen*, Tübingen, Francke, 1998, p. 35-49.

gakusei was the context of its preparation. The Order was promulgated when most of the leading officials were on the Iwakura mission, that is absent from Japan.¹⁰ The results of the mission could not be included in the new law. Popular resistance to compulsory schooling was harsh.¹¹ Moreover, the actual implementation of the regulations proved difficult and needed additional efforts.

In this situation, reference to and adaptation of foreign models was a major strategy in the institutionalisation process. The Iwakura mission which left Japan in December 1871, was the most carefully planned endeavour to appropriate foreign knowledge of its period. It comprised forty-eight members who toured North America and Europe for one and a half years. Tanaka Fujimaro was its educational commissioner. He visited schools and met with educational administrators. Tanaka notably beloved the education system of the United States. After his return to Japan Tanaka published a report on his observations.¹² Because of his foreign experience he was promoted vice-minister of education.¹³ But the Iwakura mission also stopped at the world exhibition which was taking place Vienna, the capital of the Habsburg Empire, in 1873. The Japanese government sent a second mission directly to Vienna which had the exclusive scope of investigating the exhibition and thus getting acquainted with European education. It also published a report on education.¹⁴ In Vienna, Japanese commissioners were eager to purchase pedagogical literature and appliances. By their excessive demand of books for low prices, commissioners even provoked – as one French publishing house called it – a “Japanese affair”.¹⁵

¹⁰ SCHWEBER, Abigail, *Imposing Education: the Establishment of Japan's First National Education System, 1872-1879*, PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2003, p. 14-54.

¹¹ PLATT, Brian, *Burning and Building: Schooling and State Formation in Japan, 1750-1890*, Cambridge, Harvard University Asia Center, 2004.

¹² TANAKA, Fujimaro, *Monbushō Riji Kōtei*, Tōkyō, Monbushō, 1873.

¹³ The position of minister of education was not attributed. Tanaka was thus the highest ranking official in the *monbushō*.

¹⁴ *Okoku hakurankai hōkokusho: kyōiku*, Tōkyō, Hakurankai jimukyoku, 1875.

¹⁵ “Affaire japonaise (avortée pour l’instant)”. ANF, F17, 9386, Letter Ch. Larochette to Schaeffer, 25 October 1873.

Exhibitions were a convenient means to get in contact with foreign colleagues, institutions and ideas. This was even more pronounced three years later. In 1876, the *monbushō* sent a mission to the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. Tanaka again served as the mission's head. The American David Murray also belonged to the Japanese commission. He had become a foreign advisor to the Ministry in 1873.¹⁶ His trip to Philadelphia was the first time he left Japan during his service for the *monbushō*. Another commissioner was Tejima Seiichi, a young official of the Ministry. Takamine Hideo and Isawa Shūji, two Japanese normal school students in the United States on *monbushō* fellowships, also assisted the commission as translators in Philadelphia. On the exhibition grounds the commissioners found many relevant information. But they also toured the United States and Canada and participated in various educational conferences. They got to know the foremost American educators. Murray and Tanaka published several reports about American education.¹⁷ The Japanese profited from Murray's acquaintance with the world of American education. Murray spent almost 5,000 dollars for the purchase of educational literature and appliances.¹⁸ The foundation of the Educational Museum in Tokyo in 1877 was a direct outcome of the mission to Philadelphia. The museum received most of the purchased materials. Tejima became the first director of the museum.¹⁹ Educational museums were founded all over the world. They were pedagogical think tanks, information centres for teachers and played an role in international relations.²⁰ The collections of Western books in the library of the Educational Museum illustrates well this American dominance. A catalogue of 1881 indicates 2,875 volumes in European

¹⁶ YOSHIIE, Sadao, *David Murray, Superintendent of Educational Affairs in Japan: His Views on Education and His Influences in Japan and in the United States*, PhD thesis, State University of New York at Buffalo, 1992.

¹⁷ TANAKA, Fujimaro, *Beikoku hyakunenki hakurankai kyōiku hōkoku*, Tōkyō, Monbushō, 1877.

¹⁸ Library of Congress, David Murray collection.

¹⁹ KOMATSU, Kayoko, « Formation and Transformation of Education in Japan through Exhibitions: Focused on the Educational Museum Founded in 1877 », in: LAWN, Martin (ed.), *Modelling the Future. Exhibitions and the Materiality of Education*, Oxford, Symposium Books, 2009, p. 73-86. See also ISHIZUKI, Minoru, *Kyōiku Hakubutsukan to Meiji no Kodomo*, Tōkyō, Fukumura Shuppan, 1986.

²⁰ FUCHS in LAWN.

languages. Half of them were published in the United States. A further third came from Britain. About eighty percent of the materials thus had an Anglo-Saxon background.²¹ The United States thus became the most important model for Japanese education in the 1870s. Tanaka argued that it was in the United States that education had reached the highest level worldwide.²²

Two years later, in occasion of the 1878 exhibition at Paris, commissioners Kuki Ryūichi and Tejima Seiichi travelled to various European countries and visited educational institutions. But this did not change the Japanese preference for American models. Even in France Japanese education experts expressed their admiration for the American exhibit.²³

Knowledge accumulated in the United States had a major impact on two successive reformulations of the Educational Code. What did the Japanese officials actually like about American education? Tanaka wanted decentralisation and give authority to local school boards, as it was the case in the United States. He ignored, however, that even in the United States the trend went to centralisation on the state level. The Education Code (*Kyōikurei*) of 1879 which created local school boards and decentralised education provoked chaos and declining attendance. Tanaka had to leave the Ministry. The Revised Education Code (*Kaisei kyōikurei*) of 1880, inspired by Murray's disciples, recentralised authority with the Ministry in Tokyo.

The world exhibitions provided an excellent opportunity for the Japanese officials to get in contact with their colleagues from other countries. But it would be a mistake to think that only the Japanese were making efforts in appropriating foreign models to their country. As

²¹ See also HASHIMOTO, Miho, *Meiji shoki ni okeru Amerika kyōiku jōhō juyō no kenkyū*, Tōkyō, Kazama Shobō, 1998.

²² *The Addresses and Journal of Proceedings of the National Educational Association. Session of the year 1876 in Baltimore, Maryland*, Salem, Vatem, 1876, p. 70.

²³ United States National Archives, Microfilm M-635, Roll 10, Letter John Eaton to John D. Philbrick, Washington DC, 30 September 1878.

contacts stabilised over a decade, network structures formed out.²⁴ In the United States, the Japanese education experts had close ties with a generation of the late common school crusaders.²⁵ In France, republican educators were engaged in preparing major reforms in school legislation. They also referred to American models. One can observe a triangle constellation at the exhibitions of the 1870s.²⁶ They were occasions where the young officials of the *monbushō*, French republican educators and the old American common school crusaders regularly came together.

Alongside other transfer vehicles, the educational sections of world exhibitions were a major tool for getting into contact with foreign educational models. Once Japanese education reached a certain degree of maturity, Japanese education experts became eager to present their institutional achievements to an international public.

II. MODERNITY AND TRADITION – EXHIBITIONS AS MEDIA FOR SELF-REPRESENTATION

Indeed, the Ministry of Education and its schools demonstrated the ambitions of the Meiji elite to the world. Although Japan participated in the Vienna exhibition, the newly created *monbushō* was not yet ready for its own exhibit.²⁷ The Centennial Exhibition of 1876 saw the first international exhibit of Japanese education.²⁸

The Japanese educational exhibits did not differ substantially from those of other countries. School buildings and furniture were represented in original, reduced size or on photographs. Educational appliances, such as wall charts, pencils, abacus and others constituted a second

²⁴ FUCHS, Eckhardt, « Networks and the History of Education », in: *Paedagogica Historica*, 43, 2, 2007, p. 185-197.

²⁵ TYACK, David, HANSOT, Elisabeth, *Managers of virtue: public school leadership in America, 1820-1980*, New York, Basic Books, 1982.

²⁶ DITTRICH, Klaus, « La modernisation du système éducatif à travers les Expositions universelles, 1873-1904 », in: *Japon pluriel* 8, Arles, Picquier, 2010 (forthcoming).

²⁷ *Notice sur l'Empire du Japon et sur sa participation à l'Exposition universelle de Vienne, publiée par la commission impériale japonaise*, Yokohama, C. Lévy, 1873.

²⁸ *Official catalogue of the Japanese section, and descriptive notes on the industry and agriculture of Japan*, Philadelphia, Japanese Commission, 1876.

group. Masses of literature, such as textbooks, ministerial reports and pedagogical monographs turned the educational sections into small libraries. Pupils' works should prove the success of the applied methods.

In addition to the actual exhibits the *monbushō* especially published books and pamphlets which discussed the history of Japanese education and its current organisation. For the Philadelphia exhibition the *monbushō* published *An Outline History of Japanese Education, Literature and Arts*, republished two years later for the Paris exhibition.²⁹ This book was of high quality and can still be found in many libraries all over the world today. In the following years, these publications were rather boring, being mere translations of regulations and laws with some introductory comments.

In the 1870s the exhibits provided visitors with the possibility to directly experience the institutionalisation and transfer processes going on in Japan. Japanese officials staged Japan as a country about to appropriate European and American features. The Paris exhibit of 1878, for example, comprised Tanaka's reports from the Iwakura mission and his trip to the Centennial, Murray's translated reports as well as Japanese translations of French, Dutch and Prussian school regulations.³⁰ In the 1870s Japan presented itself as a distinctively modern country that was successful in liberating itself from older traditions. The new rulers of Meiji Japan described the old regime in a negative light because they had to show the difference to Tokugawa times in order to legitimate their own activities.

²⁹ *An outline history of Japanese education, literature and arts: prepared by the Mombusho for the Philadelphia International Exhibition 1876*, New York, Appleton, 1876.

³⁰ *Catalogue des objets envoyés à l'Exposition universelles de Paris (mai 1878) par le Ministère de l'Instruction Publique du Japon*, Paris, Imprimerie H. Lurier, 1878. See also GALAN, Christian, « Le nouveau paradigme éducatif du début de Meiji. Analyse d'une liasse de compositions écrites par des écoliers japonais durant les années 1870 », in: HORIUCHI, Annick (ed.), *Education au Japon et en Chine. Eléments d'histoire*, Paris, Les Indes savantes, 2006, p. 21-48.

This perspective began to change from the 1880s onwards, after most legal and institutional arrangements had been settled.³¹ The Ministry's booklet for the 1889 exhibition stipulated that the institutionalisation of education system was now accomplished.³² In 1900, one could find a far more positive description of old regime Japan. The *monbushō* brochure for the *Exposition universelle* stressed continuity over centuries and indigenous traditions.³³ The publications now even suggested that the 1870s had experienced too much westernisation.

This was also related to changes in the education system. Mori Arinori who became Minister of Education in 1886 favoured the Prussian over the United States model. The school laws of the same year remodelled Japanese education. Historians spoke of a “conservative counterattack”.³⁴ As each child had to participate in primary education, schools defined the relationship between the state and the citizens as well as between the citizens themselves. In consequence, schools played a fundamental role for Japanese nationalism. The Imperial Rescript on Education (*kyōiku chokugo*) of 1890 and the introduction of moral instruction (*shūshin*) underlined the nationalistic exploitation of education. The publications of the *monbushō* show that values such as unconditional devotion of the Emperor and filial piety became central. A *History of Japan* prepared by the Ministry of Education for the Columbian Exposition is of interest in this regard:

³¹ Daniel Hedinger has remarked that the *monbushō* publication of 1876 referred to the events of 1868 as a “revolution” whereas the ministry's publication of 1884 spoke of a “restoration”. See HEDINGER, Daniel, « Showcases of Revolutionary Transformation: Exhibitions in the Early Meiji Period », in: *Comparativ*, 19, 2/3, 2009, p. 78-102, here p. 80.

³² *Observations explicatives sur les objets envoyés à l'exposition universelle de Paris (1889) par le Ministère de l'instruction publique du Japon*, Tokyo, Ministère de l'instruction publique du Japon, 1889, p. 3.

³³ “Aussi loin qu'on peut remonter dans l'histoire de notre pays, on constate que de tout temps on y a compris la valeur de l'instruction et la nécessité de la répandre. Aux débuts même de l'Empire, il existe déjà une éducation, et cette éducation a un caractère original, elle se propose la culture de certaines qualités particulières, dont les premières sont le dévouement sans réserve au souverain, la piété filiale et la vaillance. [...] Bien que les vicissitudes politiques n'aient pas laissé de l'affecter dans une certaine mesure, l'éducation nationale n'en a pas moins poursuivi sans déviation un idéal élevé, s'efforçant toujours de développer à la fois le savoir et la vertu, d'inculquer des sentiments d'honneur, de faire respecter la morale, de pratiquer l'humanité, visant à former des corps robustes et des caractères sûrs.” *Notice sur l'organisation de l'instruction publique au Japon*, Tokyo, 1899, p. 1-2. The use of the term “national education” for the Tokugawa period is striking.

³⁴ PASSIN, Herbert, *Society and Education in Japan*, New York, Bureau of Publications – Teachers College – Columbia University, 1965, p. 81.

“The Japanese Empire has an origin different from that of other States. It owes nothing to aggression or conquest, but is founded entirely upon the loyal deference and obedience rendered by its people to the virtues and power of an unbroken line of illustrious sovereigns. [...] It is doubtful whether, wide as the world is and numerous as are the States composing it, there has ever elsewhere been known a country happy in the possession of such an unbroken line of sovereigns and so uniformly loyal a nation of subjects.”³⁵

The growing scientific excellence of Tokyo Imperial University was another central part of turn-of-the-century exhibits. One of the university’s specialities was seismicity and earthquake research. This international performance was presented at the Columbian Exposition and others.³⁶ The catalogue claimed that the relation of Japan as a learner and Europe and America as a teacher had been reversed:

“[...] Not only have all forms of seismographs and seismoscopes employed in Europe and America been employed [in Japan], but many special forms have been designed in Japan, with the result that rather than Japan borrowing from Europe and America, these countries are using inventions which had their origin in Japan.”³⁷

This quote testifies to a growing Japanese self-confidence. Behind Japan’s exhibits stood Tejima Seiichi who was now called Japan’s “exhibition man”. He did not only represent his Technical College (*Tōkyō kōgyō gakkō*) where he had meanwhile made a major contribution as “father of industrial education in Japan”, but represented the nation. The Japanese exhibits were efforts of cultural diplomacy in a hostile international environment when uneven treaties were still in force.³⁸

Japan’s behaviour at the exhibitions was not unique, but part of a global process. The other *sociétés impériales* such as France, Germany and United States also presented their national institutions with a claim of superiority. Expositions were vectors of the changes of Japanese

³⁵ *History of the Empire of Japan, compiled and translated for the Imperial Japanese Commission of the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, U.S.A., 1893*, Tokyo, Dai Nippon Tosho, ²1895, p. 16-18.

³⁶ CLANCEY, Gregory, *Earthquake Nation. The Cultural Politics of Japanese Seismicity, 1868-1930*, Berkeley/Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 2006, p. 163-164.

³⁷ *Catalogue of Objects Exhibited at the World's Columbian Exposition*, Tokyo, Department of Education, 1893, p. 54.

³⁸ LANGLOIS, Lisa Kaye, *Exhibiting Japan: gender and national identity at the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893*, PhD thesis, University of Michigan, 2004.

nationalism. Organisers pursued a double strategy: on the one hand they marked their belonging to the civilised world. On the other hand they clearly wanted to make a difference. Until now we have seen how Japanese actors of the *monbushō* used world exhibitions in two ways. On the one hand they learned from abroad. On the other hand they represented Japanese education and its recent institutions on an international scene. Both functions have well been studied in numerous scholarly publications. But how did European observers judge the Japanese educational exhibits? This is the innovative part of this paper, so far no research has been published on this topic.

III. EUROPEAN REACTIONS TO JAPANESE EXHIBITS

The Japanese exhibits received attention from European education experts who visited the world exhibitions. In a world where communication over large distances was still difficult, world exhibitions were one of the few events to exchange information on an international stage. Together with other publications on Japanese education³⁹ and the English edition of the *monbushō* annual reports, world exhibitions were one of the few occasions for European experts to stay informed about developments in Japan. In the same way, most European publications on Japanese education appeared on the aftermath of world exhibitions.⁴⁰ In their reports on education at world exhibitions, the authors usually concentrated on European and American countries. Japan took only a marginal place in their accounts. They wrote reports because they were obliged to do so as government commissioners.

³⁹ See for example KIKUCHI, Dairoku, *Japanese education: lectures delivered in the University of London*, London, J. Murray, 1909.

⁴⁰ Nevertheless there are some other publications, see for example BOLLJAHN, J., « Das Japanische Schulwesen », in: *Deutsche Zeitschrift für ausländisches Unterrichtswesen*, 5, 1900, p. 289-310; HÜBNER, Max, *Das Schulmuseum zu Tokio: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Schulmuseen. Unter Mitwirkung von Prof. Dr. Yoshihiro Miwa, Stabsarzt Dr. E. Hadano u. Reg. R. U. Ouchi*, Breslau, Hirt, 1903; KOBEL, Oskar, « Das japanische Volksschulwesen », in: *Archiv für Lehrerbildung/Weltpädagogik*, 1, 1903, p. 127-131; PHILIPPI, Martha, « Das Bildungswesen in Japan », in: *Archiv für das Volksbildungswesen aller Kulturvölker*, 1, 1907, p. 313-334.

France was a main organiser of world exhibition during the latter half of the nineteenth century. Accordingly, there are numerous reports French education experts wrote after the closure of the events. German reporting from world exhibitions, by contrast, is relatively scarce. Two reasons explain this circumstance. On the one hand Germany did not participate in all world exhibitions of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, when participating, as was the case of the American exhibitions in Chicago and St. Louis, German organisers rather demonstrated pride in their own institutions.⁴¹

1. 1876 – The Centennial Exhibition of Philadelphia

In 1876 a French mission was sent to the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. Its task was to study the American education system. The outcome of the mission was a monumental report on education in the United States which was crucial for the preparation of educational reforms in France. In some parts, however, the report also discussed the situation of the other countries represented at the exhibition. Its author, Ferdinand Buisson, was a young official of the Ministry of Public Instruction who had a long brilliant career ahead.⁴² Japan appears only three times in his report of seven hundred pages. Buisson argued that the educational movement of Japan was remarkable and praised its recent strong development. He shortly commented on Japanese school desks. Buisson stated that coloured pictures showed the old Japanese schools with pupils sitting on the floor. Next to the pictures were two types of original school desks of recent production sent by the *monbushō*. Buisson argued that the

⁴¹ DITTRICH, Klaus, « Deutsche Berichterstattung über die Bildungssektionen der Weltausstellungen des 19. Jahrhunderts. Ein Literaturüberblick », in: KESPER-BIERMANN, Sylvia, WISCHMEYER, Johannes (eds), *Bildungsräume und transnationale Kommunikation im 19. Jahrhundert. Wissenstransfers im Schul- und Hochschulbildungssektor – Pädagogik, Theologie, Jurisprudenz*, Mainz, Institut für Europäische Geschichte, 2010 (forthcoming); FUCHS, Eckhardt, « Das Deutsche Reich auf den Weltausstellungen vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg », in: *Comparativ*, 9, 5/6, 1999, p. 61-88; POHL, Heinz-Alfred, « Die Weltausstellungen im 19. Jahrhundert und die Nichtbeteiligung Deutschlands in den Jahren 1878 und 1889. Zum Problem der Ideologisierung der außenpolitischen Beziehungen in der zweiten Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts », in: *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 97, 1988, p. 381-425.

⁴² On Ferdinand Buisson see DITTRICH, Klaus, « Appropriation, Representation and Cooperation as Transnational Practices: The Example of Ferdinand Buisson », in: LÖHR, Isabella, WENZLHUEMER, Roland (eds), *The Nation State and Beyond: Governing Globalization Processes in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century*, Heidelberg/New York, Springer, 2011 (forthcoming).

quality of the new school furniture equals that of the best European schools.⁴³ Furthermore, in a section on pre-school education, Buisson remarked that it was especially interesting to see a kindergarten of Edo [sic] directed by a Japanese who had learned the method abroad.⁴⁴ Buisson also quoted in its entirety a pupil's composition work in French from a foreign language school in Osaka. In the text the pupil complains that French language classes have been discontinued at the *Kaisei gakkō* in Tokyo.⁴⁵ These scarce remarks already showed narratives that recurred in the following years: the dynamism of the Japanese development, its alleged orientation on European models and the neatness of kindergarten instruction.

2. 1878 – The *Exposition universelle* of Paris

Whereas no German report exists from the Centennial Exhibition, there was reporting from Paris two years later. Hermann Cohn visited the *Exposition universelle* of 1878. He was an ophthalmologist at the University of Breslau and an expert of school hygiene. He had published an important study on the relation between school equipment and short sightedness before. Cohn was interested in material aspects of schooling. In his report, he discussed all the school buildings and school desks at the exhibition. Among others he commented on the reduced size models of Japanese elementary schools. He judged that the windows were sufficiently big to enlighten the classroom. But Cohn was bewildered by an older Japanese elementary school which did not show any windows. As he wrote, a Japanese commissioner with an excellent command of the French language reassured him that henceforth all Japanese schools were built according to the best European models. Cohn also commented on school desks. There was a model from the University of Tokyo. Cohn judged that it was just a normal bench without educational specificities. Furthermore, there were photographs of

⁴³ BUISSON, Ferdinand, *Rapport sur l'instruction primaire à l'Exposition universelle de Philadelphie en 1876*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1878, p. 204.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 219.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 517.

modern and older desks in use in elementary schools. The older ones were very low with children being on their knees in front of them. The modern ones corresponded to the European style, though they were rather simple. As Cohn wrote, the Japanese commissioner reassured him that the modern way of seating has already been introduced throughout the country.⁴⁶

There was a second voice from Germany. A certain Michael G. Conrad reported for the *Allgemeine deutsche Lehrerzeitung*, a pedagogical journal read by primary teachers. Conrad favourably comment on the exhibit of the “highly skilled Japanese” with their “linguistic and logic smartness”. Conrad concluded that Japan can be considered a happy country with a great future.⁴⁷

Obviously, many French reports exist. The Universal Exposition in Paris in 1878 was an occasion for teachers from all over France to come to the capital. The Ministry of Public Instruction sponsored their journey to and sojourn in Paris where they should get acquainted with the latest pedagogical innovations. In counterpart, they had to write a report after their return and send it to the Ministry. These reports provide us with information on the opinion of ordinary teachers who did not belong to the higher level in the professional hierarchy. A certain J.J. Raoulx, for example, was the headmaster of a higher primary school in Marseille in southern France. Raoulx mentioned the Japanese exhibit in a positive way. He commented on Japanese pupils’ works on writing slates which he considered charming and of a high quality. The headmaster confessed that the Japanese must be an extremely practical people.

⁴⁶ COHN, Hermann, *Die Schulhygiene auf der Pariser Weltausstellung, 1878*, Breslau, Morgenstern, 1879, p. 15-16, 34-35.

⁴⁷ “Im vortheilhaftesten Lichte erschienen die schulischen Leistungen der hochbegabten Japanesen. Vierzehnjährige Knaben bemeistern ihre Aufsatzthemen in französischer, englischer und deutscher Sprache, daß es eine wahre Wonne ist. Die linguistische und logische Gewandtheit dieses schlitzäugigen Schulvolkes ist erstaunlich. Man sieht aber auch die überraschenden materiellen Resultate dieser vielseitigen Schulung in der glänzenden Ausstellung der japanischen Fabrikanten und den ausgebreiteten Geschäften ihrer Kaufleute. Ein glückliches Land, dem eine große Zukunft lächelt.” CONRAD, Michael G., « Schule und Weltausstellung », in: *Allgemeine deutsche Lehrerzeitung*, 47, 1878, p. 413-414, here p. 414.

He concluded: “Progress is assured and on a continuous rise in this country which will soon belong to the most civilised nations.”⁴⁸ In a very sharp contrast to his observations on Japan, Raoulx used only one sentence to describe the Chinese exhibit: “The Chinese exhibition is not worth of mentioning.”⁴⁹

A certain Noel was a primary instructor from Nancy in the eastern part of France. Noel stated that the country makes fast progress in all sciences. Noel believed that Japan’s development was due to French initiative. Discussing the curricula as well as the plans and photographs of Japanese schools, Noel considered that they were an intelligent and well implemented imitation of the pedagogical organisation of the schools of the most advanced countries of Europe. Noel reveals that he admired the Japanese charts for object lessons.⁵⁰ He concluded in a similar manner to his colleague from Marseille: “Japan makes fast progress in all the sciences of the Western peoples. This country leaves China, its proud neighbour, far behind.”⁵¹

A team of French education experts resembled pupils’ works from foreign countries. Japan was part of their collection. The volume should represent the methods applied as well as results of contemporary instruction. The *monbushō* presented pupils’ works in Japanese and French language as well as mathematics. The commissioner of the Japanese section, Kuki

⁴⁸ “Le progrès est assuré et suit une marche ascensionnelle qui mettra bientôt ce pays au rang des nations les plus civilisées.” RAOULX, J. J., *Rapport sur l'exposition universelle de 1878 (Éducation et enseignement)*, Marseille, Imprimerie de Blanc et Bernard, 1880, p. 32.

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁰ Object lessons were a form of instruction not based on abstract texts, but on the visual display of familiar and unfamiliar object. Originally developed by Pestalozzi, object lessons were a up-to-date educational feature in Europe, North America and Japan in the 1870s. For Japan see also LINCICOME, Mark Elwood, *Principle, Praxis, and the Politics of Educational Reform in Meiji Japan*, Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 1995.

⁵¹ “Ce pays fait des progrès rapides dans toutes les sciences des peuples de l’occident, et distance de loin la Chine, son orgueilleuse voisine.” NOEL, E., *Exposition universelle de 1878. Classe VI, enseignement primaire. Rapport sur les visites d'études*, Nancy, Imprimerie de N. Collin, 1878, p. 26-28.

Ryūichi, helped with the translation of the Japanese works into French.⁵² Some of the original pupils' works are still preserved in Paris until today.⁵³

Moreover, a general volume by Clovis Lamarre and F. de Fontpertuis on China and Japan at the exhibition mentions education at many instances.⁵⁴ The authors state that elementary instruction had never been neglected in Japan; there were only few people who cannot read and write simple characters. The abolishment of the Chinese characters, however, would be an “immense progress” because they constitute a “big obstacle” for the further development of education. For the authors, Japan was an inferior civilisation – refined and complete, but inferior. It was then the question for the authors if Japan would be able to remodel itself following the example of foreign civilisations which it had hated and forbidden for centuries. There are several opinions, they argued, but most would be pessimistic and consider the Japanese efforts as “ephemeral”. They claimed that Japan was only superficially adopting European institutions without understanding their deeper sense: “Japan will be condemned to a fatal failure if it limits itself to superficially copy the Western practices and to adopt some highlights of our civilisation instead of advancing to the core of our knowledge and to adapt it in degrees.”⁵⁵ The authors doubted about the level of Japanese primary schools, as they suggested that it would now be necessary – after the creation of the institutions – that students receive a rational and fruitful instruction. As Japan appeared as backward in some respects, it appeared as decisively modern in others. The authors stated with surprise that object lessons were already widely used in Japan: “the fastidious, sterile and exclusive method of lessons

⁵² *Devoirs d'écoliers étrangers, recueillis à l'Exposition universelle de Paris (1878) et mis en ordre par MM. de Bagnaux, Berger, Brouard, Buisson et Defodon*, Paris, Hachette, 1879, p. 1-8.

⁵³ For an in-depth discussion of these works see GALAN, « Le nouveau paradigme éducatif ».

⁵⁴ LAMARRE, Clovis, FONTPERTUIS, F. de, *La Chine et le Japon à l'Exposition de 1878*, Paris, C. Delagrave, 1878.

⁵⁵ “[Le Japon] est condamné à un insuccès fatal, s’il se borne à imiter superficiellement les pratiques occidentales et à emprunter les vernis de notre civilisation [...] au lieu d’en conquérir la substance et de se l’assimiler par degrés.”

learned by heart which to the shame of the old Europe still prevails in most schools does not always exist in Japan.”⁵⁶

3. 1885 – the World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition of New Orleans

The International Health and Education Exhibition of London and the directly following World’s Industrial and Cotton Centennial Exposition of New Orleans were two important events in the world of education with a strong Japanese participation.⁵⁷ France also participated in both exhibitions. The French commissioner general was Benjamin Buisson, the brother of Ferdinand Buisson. He served as commissioner to many exhibitions in the 1880s and 1890s. Buisson wrote a report from New Orleans where he commented very positively on Japan:

“The astonishing progress of public instruction in Japan evokes our particular interest. This country has made us the most gentle compliment of imitating our organisational features and recent reforms. Maybe, if examining the issue closely, one might find out that some of our recent reforms have been faster and more effectively been applied in Japan than in France.”⁵⁸

But, against Buisson’s argumentation, Japan had in fact not learned so much from in the last years. The French republican education system was introduced in 1882 and Japan had not experienced major changes of the educational legislation since then. The reason for the claim that Japan had copied from France was to flatter the latter’s prestige. Moreover, Buisson was one of the French republican educators for whom the secular character of public instruction was a major issue in the struggle against the Catholic Church. In this context Buisson reports

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 79.

⁵⁷ HIRATA, Yūji, « 1884nen London bankoku eisei hakurankai ni okeru Nihon no kyōiku no shōkai », in: *Tsukuba Daigaku Kyoiku Gaku Kei Ronshu*, 27, 2003, p. 63-75; HIRATA, Yūji, « 1884-5nen New Orleans bankoku hakurankai ni okeru Nihon no kyōiku no shōkai », in: *Tsukuba journal of educational studies*, 2, 2004, p. 1-16.

⁵⁸ “Les étonnants progrès de l’instruction publique au Japon doivent avoir pour nous un intérêt particulier, car ce pays nous a fait le plus flatteur des compliments, en imitant sur un grand nombre de points notre organisation et nos réformes récentes. Peut-être même, si l’on examinait de très près les choses, trouverait-on que certaines de nos nouvelles lois, encore imparfaitement appliqués chez nous, ont été adoptées immédiatement au Japon, et pourraient bien y être plus vite généralisées qu’en France même.” BUISSON, Benjamin Paul, *Rapport sur l’instruction publique à l’exposition universelle de la Nouvelle-Orléans: 1884-1885*, Paris, Chaix, 1886, p. 14-18, here p. 14.

a conversation with Hattori Ichizō, vice-rector of Tokyo Imperial University and commissioner to New Orleans. Hattori informed Buisson that there is no faculty of theology at his university: “I still remember the firm conviction, typical of an Oriental sage, with which he explained us that theology has no place at a Japanese university.”⁵⁹ In this respect as well, Japan seemed like the promised land of European administrators where reforms could be carried out more easily without the constraints of a strong religious tradition. Buisson also praised the kindergartens that applied the Fröbel⁶⁰ method. He remarked that “nothing more delicious or more gratifying in quaint variety can be imagined than the kindergarten work of Japanese children. Anyone expected in such a short time more instructive and gracious toys more ingenious occupations that can develop the agility of the young hands, train the senses, form the desire of activity and inventiveness.”⁶¹ Buisson then quoted Paul Bourde, a French colonial administrator, who had suggested that France should adopt Japanese and not French models for the development of education in its colony Indochina. For the first time one finds the argument that one can concretely learn from Japan.

4. 1889 – The *Exposition universelle* of Paris

The *Exposition universelle* of 1889 saw one of the greatest educational sections ever. The international jury prepared several volumes of official reports in order to store the knowledge accumulated at the exhibition. Benjamin Buisson was again the author of the official report on primary education. He reminded his readers that Japan had already convinced at the previous exhibitions in Paris and London when its exhibits did not stand back to those of the European nations. This time, Buisson went on, Japan had done even more. He quoted the Swiss

⁵⁹ “Je me rappellerai toujours avec quelle sereine franchise, digne d’un sage de l’Orient, il nous expliqua qu’on ne pensait pas au Japon, qu’il y eût place pour la théologie dans le curriculum d’une université d’Etat.” Ibid., p. 16.

⁶⁰ Friedrich Fröbel was a German pedagogue who invented a method of instruction for young children based on play.

⁶¹ “Nulle part on n’a imaginé, en si peu de temps, plus de gracieux jouets instructifs, plus d’occupations ingénieuses, propres à développer l’agilité des petites mains enfantines, à exercer les sens, à éveiller le goût de l’activité et de l’invention.” Ibid., p. 15.

education expert Alfred Gobat, superintendent of public instruction of the canton of Berne and Swiss commissioner to the world exhibition who had argued that Japan is a country

“which makes giant steps on its way to progress. It is a country which imitates with intelligence the European institutions and adapts them with remarkable rapidity. We can give Japan only one advice: It has to preserve its originality and should not think that everything is good in the old Europe.”⁶²

Buisson saw many similarities between France and Japan. Concerning its population, its artistic skills and the mildness of its habits, Japan was the France of the Far East, Buisson argued. As in France, primary instruction was free of charge, compulsory and secular, although only the poor were admitted for free and only forty-five percent of school children went to school. Buisson quoted once again Gobat who argued that “now it is only Europe that preserves a place for religion in its institutions of public instruction.”⁶³ Japan was used as an argument in French internal debates on the secular or Catholic character of schooling. The kindergarten exhibit again pleased the commissioner, where he saw Europe outperformed: “In sum, an exquisite and captivating exhibit: games are sincerely adopted as a means of instruction, the real cult of childhood; the spirit of Fröbel without German pedantism.”⁶⁴

In his report on secondary education, Henri Pigeonneau, a professor at several institutions in Paris, discussed the Japanese exhibit. After mentioning the exhibits he came to the following conclusion.

“One can not change the habits of secular traditions from one day to another. The old Japanese civilisation will persist for a long time under the glamour of the European varnish. [...] The exhibition reveals a remarkable skill for assimilation and veritable aptitudes for the study of European sciences and languages. It is a lucky start which will definitively lead to success under the condition that the programmes do not become

⁶² BUISSON, Benjamin Paul, *Ministère du Commerce, de l'industrie et des colonies. Exposition universelle internationale de 1889 à Paris. Rapports du jury international. Classe 6. Éducation de l'enfant, enseignement primaire, enseignement des adultes*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1891.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 326.

overburdened and that one does not oppress the national skills by a too strong attention on Western models.”⁶⁵

Paul Jacquemart, the author of the report on technical instruction, gave ample space to Japan. He reproduced courses of study, laws and other details on the organisation of technical schooling in Japan. He appreciated the order and refinement of the exhibits of Japanese schools. He comes to the conclusion:

“Everything purely Japanese possesses a distinction of originality and elegance. That is why it is regrettable to see that this young and progressive nation imitates more and more what we do in our old Europe.”⁶⁶

A certain Lamarque who had nothing to do with the world of education published a small souvenir book from the exhibition for children. It comprised a lot of images. In a small section it concentrates on Japanese education.

“It appears that in Japan children go to school as in Paris. Here we can see a classroom where models represent students and teachers. Maybe it does not seem so comfortable but the young Japanese are known to learn very hard. They are sitting on the floor and writing. This is just a matter of habit. The school equipment is rudimentary in Japan. But they use at least desks. The proof is that the master has one in front of him.”⁶⁷

Apparently the author mixed up – intentionally or unintentionally – historical and modern Japanese exhibits. This shows that European had sometimes difficulties in differentiating between the old and the new Japan.

⁶⁵ PIGEONNEAU, Henri, *Ministère du commerce, de l'industrie et des colonies. Exposition universelle internationale de 1889 à Paris. Rapports du jury international. Classe 7. Organisation et matériel de l'enseignement secondaire*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1891, p. 526-528.

⁶⁶ JACQUEMART, Paul, *Ministère du Commerce, de l'industrie et des colonies. Exposition universelle internationale de 1889 à Paris. Rapports du jury international. Classe 6-7-8. Enseignement technique*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1891, p. 812-821.

⁶⁷ “Il paraît qu’au Japon les enfants vont à l’école tout comme à Paris. Voici une salle de classe, où élèves et professeurs sont représentés par des mannequins. Peut-être l’installation n’est-elle pas des plus confortables, mais les jeunes Japonais n’en ont que plus de mérite pour bien travailler. Ils sont assis et écrivent sur le parquet ; c’est une affaire d’habitude. Du reste, si le matériel scolaire est au Japon des plus rudimentaires, on y connaît du moins des pupitres; la preuve c’est que le maître d’école en a un devant lui.” LAMARQUE, E., *A travers l’Exposition. Promenades de deux enfants au Champs-de-Mars et à l’Esplanade des Invalides*, Paris, Lefèvre/Guérin, 1889, p. 25.

François d'Ervy made several interesting comments on the Japanese representations in general, and education in particular. They seem influenced by the Japonism discourse when European artists found inspiration in Japanese art:

“I had a very complicated, but strong feeling with regard to the Japanese. I had the feeling of a national character which suicides itself. [...] Japan is now following the path of Europe. Don't we see an immense European-style school exhibition that shows us that the country is deforming and de-originalising its spirit? [...] One tends to laugh at the Chinese when they pass in their traditional costumes. But actually their costumes fit them well. At least they do not sacrifice their national character. But look at the Japanese in their Western style clothes. Don't they have something ridiculous in their personality? The countersense of their so-called reform comes to the fore. When and where has deformation ever meant progress?”⁶⁸

Japanese education was seen at the 1889 exhibition between modernity, ironically attributed to the old Europe, on the one hand and the loss or lack of and search for originality on the other.

5. 1893 – The World's Columbian Exposition of Chicago

Benjamin Buisson was again the French commissioner and reporter from the Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893. Buisson wrote that Japan had a strong participation, as in the previous years: “a veritable chef-d'oeuvre of taste, order and clarity”. He argued that despite frequent policy and minister changes the system was well in place and developed from year to year. Buisson again mentioned recent reforms “where Japan had made to France the highest

⁶⁸ “J'eus chez les Japonais une sensation très compliquée – mais très vive – la sensation d'un génie national qui s'abdicque et se suicide.

Nous ne voyons que les plus beaux objets présentés à l'Exposition n'ont pour nous intéresser que les reflets des créations anciennes. L'habileté subsiste, mais la verve est tarie. On ne fait plus que se souvenir – et encore le souvenir n'apparaît-il, en maint objet, que fort affaibli sous la perfection du métier.

A l'heure qu'il est, le Japon s'est mis au pas de l'Europe. Ne nous offre-t-il point, par exemple, une immense exhibition scolaire à l'européenne pour nous démontrer qu'il s'entend à déformer, à désoriginaliser les esprits? Ah! Comme il se regrette lui-même un jour, lorsqu'il aura complètement perdu ce qui faisait sa force et sa grâce, l'indépendance de l'imagination, le goût de l'observation constante! Les artistes du Nippon sont désormais sous le régime des formules. Ils ont des écoles des Beaux-Arts; ils auront demain un institut décernant des prix de Rome.

On ne pense à rire des Chinois quand on en voit passer quelqu'un dans son costume traditionnel: ce costume sied à leur type fortement accusé. On leur sait gré, même, de ne rien sacrifier de leur personnalité nationale. Mais voyez les Japonais en redingote, en veston, en chapeau melon ou en chapeau noir. N'ont-ils pas quelque chose d'étriqué, de caricaturé en toute leur personne? Le sot contresens de leur soi-disant réforme éclat à plein. En quel temps, sous quelle latitude, la déformation a-t-elle jamais été le progrès?” ERVY, F. de, « Promenade aux sections orientales. Siam – Japon – Egypte – Perse – Turquie », in: *Revue de l'Exposition universelle de 1889*, Paris, Motteroz/Ludovic Baschet, 1889, p. 145-153.

possible compliment, the compliment of imitation.” This, as he went on, was especially the case for the organisation of the normal schools.⁶⁹

We have to wait until the Columbian Exposition that a German author comments again on Japanese educational exhibits. Stephan Watzoldt, director of a secondary school for girls and professor at the University of Berlin, was the head of the German educational exhibit organised in Chicago by the Prussian Ministry of education. He was in charge of a final report on education at the Chicago exposition. His report notably underlines the success of the German exhibit in a more or less chauvinistic way, neglecting the other countries. Waetzoldt dedicated only a short paragraph to Japan. He argued that the Japanese exhibit showed the successful efforts to establish European-style schools in Japan. He notably observed the force of German ideas and methods in Japan. This was in sharp contrast to Buisson who everywhere saw French ideas realised. He spoke negatively of what he called the Japanese “addiction for emulation” and “unhealthy eagerness” to superficially adopt European models instead of building on the indigenous culture.⁷⁰

6. 1900 – The *Exposition universelle* of Paris

There has been a vast and intense reporting on the occasion of the *Exposition universelle* held in Paris in 1900. The exhibition’s aim was to show the progress accomplished throughout the nineteenth century. There are several volumes of reports dealing with primary, secondary, higher, agricultural education. Japan took an important place in them. The style was clear and objective to provide useful information on the Japanese education system. René Leblanc

⁶⁹ BUISSON, Benjamin Paul, *L'enseignement primaire aux Congrès d'éducation et à l'Exposition scolaire de Chicago*, Paris, Hachette, 1896, p. 87-92.

⁷⁰ “Dagegen zeigte alles, was Japan ausgestellt hatte, wie erfolgreich die Bestrebungen dieses Landes gewesen sind, sich Schulen nach europäischem Muster einzurichten, wie stark hierin der Einfluß deutscher Gedanken und Methoden war, aber auch daß die Nachahmungssucht und der ungeduldige Eifer Japan dazu geführt haben, statt auf dem Boden seiner geschichtlichen Kultur weiterzubauen, Einrichtungen und Methoden altweltlicher Staaten äußerlich sich anzupassen.” WAETZOLD, Stephan, « Ausstellung des höheren Schulwesens und des gesamten Volksschulwesens », in: *Amtlicher Bericht über die Weltausstellung in Chicago 1893*, Berlin, Reichsdruckerei, 1894, vol. 2, p. 951-968, here p. 967.

wrote the report on primary education. The part on Japan was based on an article previously published in the *Revue pédagogique*.⁷¹ The author remarked Japan's ability to stage itself. "It is evident that this country which entered the paths of modern civilisation forty years ago feels satisfaction and voluntarily shows the fast and sustained progress it has accomplished."⁷² He saw Japan as a country which has come of age. He discussed the *monbushō* charts. Mishima Michiyoshi, a medical councillor of the Ministry of Education, had prepared charts with the height and weight of Japanese school children. The French reporter rightly realised that these tables were to illustrate "a sort of physical renaissance. Although they believe in the particularity of their race, they intend to diminish the difference in height and weight that still puts them in a position of inferiority towards the European and American people."⁷³ The author reproduced many photographs of Japanese normal schools in his report showing neatly arranged buildings in good conditions. He argued that the school material was handy, convenient and with a high pedagogical value and could be profitable for Western schools. Finally, the author doubted about the consistency of Japanese pedagogical concepts. He blamed Japanese education experts for an exaggerated eclecticism and too big a focus on German and American pedagogical thought. He came to the conclusion that Japanese pedagogues have not yet developed an original notion of pedagogy. He used this issue for a French nationalist "advice". Japan should more focus on the old masters of French pedagogy – Rabelais, Montaigne, Rousseau – who, in his opinion, could be adopted universally.⁷⁴

⁷¹ LEBLANC, René, *Exposition universelle internationale de 1900 à Paris. Rapports du jury international. Classe I: éducation de l'enfant, enseignement primaire, enseignement des adultes*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1901, p. 848-861. PELLISSON, Maurice, « Les expositions scolaires de l'étranger: Japon », in: *Revue pédagogique*, 9, 15 septembre 1900, p. 270-278.

⁷² Ibid., p. 848.

⁷³ LEBLANC, p. 849. On Mishima see UCHIDA, Takeo, « School Health Activities in Japan », in: *Japan Medical Association Journal*, 51, 1, 2008, p. 5-11.

⁷⁴ LEBLANC, p. 857-858. "Les éducateurs japonais ne pourront nous savoir mauvais gré de les engager à boire aux sources qu'on trouve sur les plus hauts sommets."

Léon Dabat presented a detailed and objective account on agricultural education in Japan. He treated the college of agriculture of Tokyo Imperial University, Sapporo Agricultural College and the Agronomical Institute of Tokyo.⁷⁵

Henry Lemmonier, the author of the report on secondary education, stated that the jury had (probably linguistic) difficulties in grasping some of the organisation of secondary education in Japan. However, the sober and delicate elegance, the ingenuity of arrangement as well as the students' works convinced the jury of the high standing of secondary education in Japan. Lemmonier quoted from the Japanese booklet that Japan had not only imitated European models but also built on indigenous traditions. He also cited that Tokyo Higher Normal School (*Tōkyō kōtō shihan gakkō*) had been established on the site of a Confucian shrine and that Confucius had been the unique master of Japanese education for centuries.⁷⁶ Thus, a positive evaluation of properly Japanese traditions slowly made its way to European accounts.

Paul Jacquemart was the author of the report on professional education. He extensively quoted the regulations and imperial rescripts on technical education on the different levels from the Japanese publications. The account is detailed, but has only few judgements. Jacquemart remarked that Japan is the only country in the world where one can take a lesson of commercial morality.⁷⁷

In sharp contrast to the education experts, Gustave Babin, the author of a short section on Japan in a memorial book on the exhibition for a general public, negatively interpreted Japanese modernisation. Babin esteemed that the “satanic progress” was more and more

⁷⁵ DABAT, Léon, *Exposition universelle internationale de 1900 à Paris. Rapports du jury international. Groupe I. Education et enseignement. Classe 5*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1904, p. 398-421.

⁷⁶ LEMONNIER, Henry, *Exposition universelle internationale de 1900 à Paris. Rapports du jury international. Groupe I. Education et enseignement. Classe 2 à 4*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1902, p. 74-77.

⁷⁷ JACQUEMART, Paul, *Ministère du Commerce, de l'industrie, des postes et des télégraphes. Exposition universelle internationale de 1900, à Paris. Rapports du jury international. Classe 6: enseignement technique*, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1903, p. 212-230.

mixed to Japanese art and lifestyle. “What we would like most is exactly everything traditional, the opposite of progress, the past”, he concluded.⁷⁸

There is only one German educational report from the Paris 1900 exhibition. It comes from Alwin Pabst, the director of a manual training seminary in Leipzig. He travelled to Paris in order to study the superior methods of manual training applied in the schools of France and other participating countries. This study should bring fresh ideas to his own institution in Germany. For Alwin Pabst, the Japanese exhibit was only in so far of interest, as it showed how – as he put it – the intelligent and skilled people of the Far East adapt to European culture. But he could not yet imagine to learn anything from Japan.⁷⁹

7. 1904 – The Louisiana Purchase Exposition of St. Louis

In St. Louis, Japan made again a complete exhibit in the educational section.⁸⁰ In 1904 Henri Cordier was a French commissioner and jury member at the St. Louis exposition. Cordier was a professor at the School of Oriental Languages (*Ecole des langues orientales*) in Paris. He was a geographer specialising in East Asia and thus a real specialist of the region. Cordier wrote up a small report on secondary education at the exposition focusing exclusively on the United States and Japan. Cordier treated Japan as an equal nation, without Orientalist nostalgia.⁸¹

The Louisiana Purchase Exposition attracted numerous German education experts to the United States. They were interested in the latest developments in technical and art education. Leopold Bahlsen, director of a grammar school in northern Germany and a specialist in the

⁷⁸ “Ce qui nous plaira le mieux, c’est précisément tout ce qui est, chez lui, traditionnel, c’est l’envers du progrès, c’est le passé.” BABIN, Gustave, « Les secteurs étrangères. La concession japonaise », in: *Le livre d’or de l’Exposition de 1900*, Paris, Edouard Cornély, 1900, p. 133-135.

⁷⁹ PABST, Alwin, *Der Handfertigkeitsunterricht auf der Pariser Weltausstellung*, Leipzig, Franckenstein und Wagner, 1900, p. 7.

⁸⁰ On the Louisiana Purchase Exposition see GILBERT, James, *Whose Fair? Experience, Memory, and the History of the Great St. Louis Exposition*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009. On Japanese education WATANABE, Kayoko, « 1904nen St. Louis bankoku hakurankai ni okeru (kyōiku) », in: *Aichi Shukutoku University. Faculty of Communication Studies*, 3, 2003, p. 149-161.

⁸¹ CORDIER, Henri, *Exposition internationale de Saint-Louis, USA, 1904. Section française. Rapport du groupe 2*, Paris, Comité français des expositions à l’étranger, 1907.

pedagogy of modern languages, was one of the organisers of the German educational exhibit. He wrote a report on the German and foreign educational exhibits in St. Louis. Bahlsen very positively wrote about the Japanese representations. Since the Sino-Japanese war Japanese education made a remarkable progress, he argued. From photographs he judged that the material disposition and equipment of schools is mostly the same as in Europe. Only the appearance of the students would make a difference. He argued that Japanese schools invested much time in learning to write. Bahlsen was also informed about the patriotic function of education Japan, for example the fact that each school possessed a copy of the Imperial Rescript on Education.⁸²

The Japanese were successful in turning their artistic taste into business and attracting the attention of foreign educators. They exercised an immense influence on painting and drawing education in the United States. This became clear in German reports.⁸³ A commission of the Prussian Ministry of Trade studied technical and art education at the exhibition and in the United States. The German commissioner Czihak reported that the Prang Educational Company, traded mostly with articles from Japan.⁸⁴ Ludwig Pallat, another expert on art education, observed during his trip to the United States in 1904 how innovators of drawing education in the United States stuck to Japanese examples. Everyone of them had studied the Japanese masters, used Japanese models in drawing, worked with Japanese brushes and so on.⁸⁵

⁸² BAHLSEN, « Die Schulausstellung der übrigen Staaten », in: *Amtlicher Bericht über die Weltausstellung in Saint Louis 1904. Erstattet vom Reichskommissar*, Berlin, Reichsdruckerei, 1906, Teil 2, p. 129-169, here p. 152-157.

⁸³ In a similar way to his German colleagues, the French painter and inspector of drawing instruction Félix Régamey travelled to Japan and reported on drawing education. REGAMEY, Félix, « L'enseignement du dessin dans les Ecoles de Tokio », in: *Revue pédagogique*, 1, 1901, p. 70-90. On Régamey see MARQUET, Christophe, « L'évolution de l'enseignement de la peinture dans la seconde moitié du XIXe siècle », in: HORIUCHI, Annick (ed.), *Education au Japon et en Chine. Eléments d'histoire*, Paris, Les Indes savantes, 2006, p. 49-76.

⁸⁴ « Bericht des Regierungs- und Gewerbeschulrats v. Czihak in Berlin », in: *Reiseberichte über Nord-Amerika. Erstattet von Kommissaren des Königlich Preußischen Ministers für Handel und Gewerbe*, Berlin, Moeser, 1906, p. 180-216, here p. 195.

⁸⁵ PALLAT, Ludwig, *Schule und Kunst in Amerika*, Leipzig/Berlin, Teubner, 1906, p. 20-28.

Alwin Pabst visited and wrote on manual training at the St. Louis exhibition. His opinion on Japan was now more well-informed than four years earlier in Paris: “We know since the 1890s that Japan has more than two hundred technical schools. If we consider that the Japanese adopted the best ideas of European education, this is not completely the case. An analysis of a collection of manual works from a boys’ school convinced me that Japanese manual training had taken an independent development. The widely acclaimed superiority of Japanese decorative arts confirms this opinion.”⁸⁶

CONCLUSION

This paper analysed the European perceptions of the Japanese educational exhibits at world exhibitions through an analysis of exhibition reports. Their reporting was intimately linked to the process of reform, institutionalisation and modernisation of education which was going on all over the world and especially in Japan during the second half of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the reporting was representative of larger developments beyond the specialised field of education. It provides insight into the European perception of Japan in a period of early globalisation.

Europeans had several perspectives on Japanese education. Firstly, some observers described the Japanese modernisation process in a negative light. The notion of the “satanic progress” best expresses this perspective. This was further related to a growing enthusiasm for original Japanese art in Europe. Feuilleton writers without a professional interest in education animated this discourse. These authors were aware of the important changes going on on the archipelago. They rightly recognised the crucial role of the establishment of a new education system in this process. Comparison with China served to depict the Chinese as true respectable Orientals and the Japanese as their degenerating counterpart. Japan as part of an imagined Orient served as antipode to a Eurocentric modernity.

⁸⁶ PABST, Alwin, *Die Knabenhandarbeit in der heutigen Erziehung*, Leipzig, Teubner, 1907, p. 111.

A second perspective shared the awareness of fundamental changes caused by the modernisation of Japan, but completely reversed the evaluation of these developments. European education experts saw Japan as a country rising to civilisation, and thus joining a universal movement. Compared to a China perceived as backward, they judged Japanese modernity as a success story. The transition from students kneeling on the floor to the use of school desks symbolised in the Europeans' eyes the transformation of Japanese schooling. The fact that the reports generally discussed the Japanese institutions in the same objective manner as those of the other nations underlines once more the normality which Japan had achieved as a member of the contemporary "civilised world".

Related to this, thirdly, education experts perceived the Japanese as copying or imitating European features. This was often linked to the reproach of eclecticism or of only superficially or formally adopting European institutions and not understanding their deeper sense or underlying logic. One can also observe a competition between experts from France, Germany (and the United States) who all claimed that Japan copied most from their respective country. The matter is not so much that Japan copied from other countries. The matter is that Europeans perceived Japan as copying but did not perceive European countries as copying. In this perspective copying is perceived as passive and ultimately negative.

However, copying from one another was a universal feature of modern societies. Fourthly, in some respects European education experts saw Japan as superior or in advance to the "old Europe". Japanese institutions and practices thus became possible models for Europe. The neatness, selected design and orderly arrangement was continuously praised and continued older discourses on Japan as a children's paradise. The proliferation of object lessons demonstrated that Japan adopted the latest educational innovations faster than European countries. The break of the Meiji restoration permitted to build-up a system from zero which was the dream of educational administrators. Some observers made reference to successful

Japanese developments in order to hint at deficits in their own institutional contexts. French republican educators appreciated the non-religious character of Japanese education.

The study of reports of European education experts not only reveals the perception of transformation processes in Japan towards the end of the nineteenth century. It also informs us about the transnational circulation of ideas during a period of early globalisation. Research suggested the reciprocity of transfers.⁸⁷ In 1904, the Scott Henry Dyer (1848-1918), the former first president of the *Kōbu Daigakkō* and later president of a Scottish technical college, urged his British countrymen to emulate Japan.⁸⁸ The historian of technical education Miyoshi Nobuhiro spoke of a “boomerang effect” that the *Kōbu Daigakkō* had on British education.⁸⁹ Appropriations and cultural transfers were highly active and creative efforts. There was no one-way road from the West to the East. Regular college instruction for architects, for example, was institutionalised in Japan two decades earlier than in Britain.⁹⁰ Japan participated in a common modernisation process from Meiji restoration onwards.

But if the entire world participated in a common modernisation process, how could Japanese actors mark their difference? How could they position themselves on the global market of nation branding? Organisers of Japanese exhibits were trapped between two possibilities. They could either present Japan as a modern country. This would attract critiques of exaggerated Westernisation. Or they could focus on Japanese traditions. In this case they could hear the argument that Japan is not yet modern. It was a complicated endeavour to convince European (and American) observers that Japan is both modern and based on its own traditions. In this perspective the turn towards alleged Japanese traditions of emperor-centeredness appears as a response to European perceptions of Japan as a passive copying

⁸⁷ ROSENSTONE, Robert A., « Learning From Those ‘Imitative’ Japanese: Another Side of the American Experience in the Mikado’s Empire », in: *American Historical Review*, 85, 3, 1980, p. 572-595.

⁸⁸ DYER, Henry, *Dai Nippon. The Britain of the East*, London, Blackie & Son, 1904, p. 425-426.

⁸⁹ MIYOSHI, Nobuhiro, *Henry Dyer: pioneer of engineering education in Japan*, Kent, Global Oriental, 2004.

⁹⁰ CLANCEY, *Earthquake Nation*, p. 20.

country. In sum, the Japanese were extremely successful in depicting Japanese education as modern. However, they were much less successful in convincing the European and American observers that they were not just copying, that their system has a value of its own.