

Francesco Vossilla

Some Examples of Artistic Exchange between East and West,
particularly from the Japan-China-Italy Perspective

*When I will be one hundred and ten, each dot,
each line will possess a life of its own*

KATSUSHIKA HOKUSAI,
100 Views of Mount Fuji

Ignorance seeking for an explanation is truly meritorious

GEORGE SOULIÉ DE MORANT,
The 47 Ronin

The first time I saw a reproduction of the photographic self-portrait (fig.1) of Yokoyama Matsusaburo (1838-1884) I was intrigued by its twofold visual quality, or at least that is what I read in such a photo of his mature period (after 1881). A poignant example of Meiji creativity, his self-portrait is original and connected with native sensibility, as the man became known mainly for his images of Japanese heritage buildings commissioned from him by the government official and art historian Ninagawa Noritane (1835-1882)¹, who was among the founders of the Tokyo National Museum. Yet, the photo of Yokoyama Matsusaburo's inquisitive and nostalgic features displays a motivated response to influences coming from Western paintings. It reminds me of contemporary Russian and French canvasses, or of Al-

¹ A. Mazza, *I grandi fotografi della scuola di Yokohama*, in *Ineffabile perfezione: la fotografia del Giappone, 1860-1910*, (exhibition cat. Oct. 23rd, 2010 - Feb. 27th, 2011, Lugano, Museo delle Culture) eds. F.P. Campione and M. Fagioli, Giunti, Florence, 2010, pp. 305-319, in particular p. 317.

brecht Dürer's Christ like self-portrait, and many more ancient images of Jesus (Italian, Flemish, as well as Russian icons). Reading a recent biography of Matsusaburo, I came to know that in his hometown of Hakodate (Hokkaido) he was variously influenced by: a) the American photographer Eliphalet M. Brown (who accompanied Commodore Matthew Perry's second expedition in Japan in 1854); b) a mysterious Russian painter named Lehman; c) some photos of a "Russian photographer" indicated as Aleksander Feodorivitch Mozahaiskii². Such a name echoed for me navy and aviation books I used to read in my childhood; thus I propose to identify the photographer Mozahaiskii with the famous researcher and aviation pioneer Alexander Fedorovich Mozhaysky (1825-1890, Imperial Russian Rear Admiral since 1882). He arrived in Japan with Vice Admiral Yevfimy Vasilyevich Putyatin, leader of the Russian Navy expedition in Japan, taking place a month after Commodore Perry's first arrival at Uraga bay in 1853. Then a simple Ship-of-the-Line Lieutenant, Mozahaysky was anyway important for the history of European technology influencing modern Japan. For example, he demonstrated a new steam engine to the Japanese inventor Tanaka Hisashige. After his frigate *Diana* sank at Heda during an earthquake (1854), Mozahaysky assisted in the construction of a new schooner (quite rightly named *Heda*), which enabled the Russian delegation to return home in 1855³. Those very negotiations resulted in the Shimoda Treaty (February 1855), which opened the ports of Hakodate, Nagasaki, and Shimoda to Russian vessels. It is then plausible that Yokoyama Matsusaburo came to appreciate Russian culture in his very city of Hakodate, where a Russian consulate was opened in 1858⁴. More certainly, Matsusaburo was in

² *Ibid.*, pp. 317-319.

³ K.M. Popov, *Japan: essays on national culture and scientific thought*, Nauka Publishing House (Central Dept. of Oriental Literature), Moscow, 1969, p. 229.

⁴ D.N. Wells, *Russian Views of Japan, 1792-1913: An Anthology of Travel Writing*, Routledge, London and New York 2004, p. 11.

touch with an amateurish photographer: the Russian Consul at Hakodate Iosif Antonovich Goshkevitch⁵. Later, he declared his interest in Western art by opening an art school in Tokyo (1873-1876), where he taught his pupils about Western paintings⁶. Eventually, his photos of Edo castle, Nara temple, and of the exquisite ceramic collection of Ninagawa Noritane⁷ made him famous in Europe, too. Nor should it be overlooked that his mentor Ninagawa was in touch with the Italian engraver Edoardo Chiossone (1833-1898), who had moved to Japan in 1875 to lead the Government Mint.

From the above reference to Yokoyama Matsusaburo's self-portrait, one easily understands how my personal and simpleminded 'discovery' of Japan is all visually oriented; possibly, I am still trying to grasp something that in my eyes possesses a generative and dynamic paradigm. This attitude of mine started back in the 1970s (and maybe I have not cultivated it properly); at the time I was not aware that the very notion of artistic progress had been virtually abandoned by artists and art historians alike, to be replaced with a more diachronic perception of cultural and aesthetic differences (and of past and present periods, too). For instance, now we might find rather inadequate (if not altogether racist) Marx's opinion of old China and Japan; in his eyes, these countries' integration into a European-based capitalism would "regenerate" Asian societies affected by "stupidity" or at least by some sort of "natural languor"⁸.

At first, I came across some graphic rendition of the *The 47 Ronin* by George Soulié de Morant (the Jesuit educated advocator of

⁵ Mazza, *I grandi fotografi*, cit., p. 317.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Ninagawa Noritane published the seminal volumes titled *Kwan-ko-dzu-setsu. Notice Historique et Descriptive Sur Les Arts et Industries Japonais*, H. Ahrens & Company, Tokyo, 1876-1878. In the preface, he laments the destruction of old buildings that prompted him to study the ancient arts of Japan; see *ibid.*, p. II.

⁸ G.P. Leupp, *Interracial Intimacy in Japan: Western Men and Japanese Women, 1543-1900*, Continuum, London and New York, 2003, p.76.

Chinese acupuncture); it may have been in the *Corriere dei Ragazzi* or in *Il Giornalino* (very popular Italian magazines for young readers 40 years ago). Then came movies like *Seven Samurai*, cartoons and comics (both American and Japanese); all of them backed up my frequent visits to the Stibbert Museum in Florence and my passion for reading crucial episodes of Yoshikawa Eiji's *Musashi*. These eclectic interests completed my superficial engagement with circles of genuine resonances; the latter were mighty or low key, if not 'pop', as they came. Certainly my naïve dislike for cultural homogenization betrayed an adolescent need for perennial exoticism, just as my own country suffered from Americanization. However, I never fell for caricature images as those that any young European male could find in Pierre Loti's *Madame Chrysanthème* (1888). By the 1980s, as Western pop singers (for example, David Bowie) were re-discovering China and Japan, Eastern and Western designers, painters, or sculptors alike started to visualize some connecting elements. The latter were well grounded in an adventurous (if not controversial) past. What my superficial understanding did not comprehend back then, it is just a little clearer to me now, after 'surfing' around Ernest Fenollosa's lofty interpretation of Japanese culture⁹ and spending time in Far East Asia (especially Taiwan, that is, a country where modern and contemporary art is 'situated' at the crossroads of Chinese, Japanese, and Western ideals). Being a foreigner in China, Japan, and Taiwan I always need to monitor if my perception of those cultures is subconsciously too self-referential. This happens to be the case even when I notice the importance of all those cultural intersections. I would say that contemporary society is naturally global whenever we all ponder the history of past exchanges. The point is to avoid both idealizations and denials regarding candid encounters, for at some corners of the grand scenario one might recognize how curiosity for distant artistic expres-

⁹ M. Sullivan, *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1989, p. 282.

sions has produced compelling and creative short-circuits, especially between China, Japan, and Italy.

Moreover, I found particularly inspiring what Marco Fagioli has written about Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849) and Utagawa Kunyoshi (1798-1861). More specifically, how different artistic relations (local, Chinese, and Western) are at play and ingeniously co-exist in their works¹⁰. Hence, it is important to underline the vibrating interactions between various aesthetic imperatives (Chinese, European, local, and not solely avant-garde)¹¹ that we recognize in many Japanese artworks of both the Edo and Meiji periods. For instance, the creative disparity between a European model and its Japanese counter-part stands out when comparing Edo screens depicting Portuguese merchants, emissaries or missionaries with the (less inventive) foreign matrix for such depictions: that is, Jan Huygen van Linschoten's engravings illustrating life in Portuguese India¹².

Generally speaking, we ought to say that various Japanese artistic endeavours have something original even when showing input from a foreign culture. In his capital analysis of East and West interaction, Michael Sullivan mentions the intermediary role Japan was to play between itself, China, and Western countries according to Okuma Shigenobu (1838-1922). Active in the Meiji period, Prime Minister Okuma wrote that only modernized Japan “had the unique capacity to graft the scientific civilisation of the West, having its origin in Greek

¹⁰ M. Fagioli, *Utagawa Kunyoshi 90 disegni*, Giulio Gannini e Figlio Editori, Florence, 1985, p. 9.

¹¹ C. Foxwell, *Introduction*, in Dōshin Satō, *Modern Japanese Art and the Meiji State. The Politics of Beauty*, The Getty Research Institute Press, Los Angeles .1999, pp. 1-27.

¹² J.H. Van Linschoten, *Voyage ofte schipvaert [. . .] naer Oost ofte Portugaels Indien* [. . .], Amsterdam, 1596. See also *Giappone terra di incanti. Di linea e di colore*, (exhibition cat. April 3rd.- July 1st. 2012, Firenze Palazzo Pitti, Museo degli Argenti) ed. F. Morena, Sillabe, Livorno, 2012, pp. 522-523.

knowledge and analysis, onto the substratum of ancient civilisation of China and India, based on intuition and sentiment”¹³. Furthermore, Okuma held that by doing so, Japan would repay its great cultural debt to China. Okuma’s suggestion was quite ‘political’, and certainly of another world; more modestly, I would say that much avant-garde art in China and Taiwan is finally coming to grasp its own identity as original (sailing the vast ocean of different media and styles), or at least as emerging and fluctuating between Chinese heritage, Western models, and the example of Japanese (often sentimental) responses to various waves of culture pressure from America. Comparisons and generalisations, differences and peculiar achievements are all to be taken seriously to avoid mere academic discussions.

In recent years, I have concentrated my researches on the Jesuit artist Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766), a Temporal Coadjutor Brother of the Society of Jesus known in China and Asia as the Qing dynasty court painter Lang Shining¹⁴. One of the early scholars of Giuseppe Castiglione was Ishida Mininosuke, who conducted his research in the 1930s. A contemporary of Ishida Mininosuke, the American orientalist Georg Robert Loehr dedicated his life to the

¹³ Sullivan, *The Meeting*, cit., p. 281.

¹⁴ Yang Boda, *Castiglione at the Qing Court – An important Artistic Contribution*, «Orientations», 19/11 (November 1988), pp. 44-51. F. Vossilla – Y. Zhang Zheng, *Giuseppe Castiglione, Painter in the Celestial Empire*, in *Nella lingua dell'altro. Lang Shining New Media Art Exhibition Giuseppe Castiglione gesuita e pittore in Cina (1715-1766)*, (exhibition cat. October 31st 2015- January 31st 2016, Firenze, Santa Croce), eds. Fung Ming-Chu and F. Vossilla, National Palace Museum, Taipei, 2015, pp. 124-153; F. Vossilla, *Il pittore venuto dall'Occidente del Mare e il suo imperatore*, in *Giuseppe Castiglione Jesuit and Painter in the Celestial Empire*, eds. A. Andreini and F. Vossilla, Edizioni Feeria, Florence, 2015, pp. 101-124; F. Vossilla, *The Jesuit painter and his Emperor. Some comments regarding Giuseppe Castiglione and the Qianlong Emperor*, «The National Palace Museum Bulletin», 49 (December 2016), pp. 69-88.

admiration of both Castiglione and Florence¹⁵. Consequently, I now study a range of cultural exchanges – both religious and secular ones – between Italy and Far Eastern countries that were fuelled by Italian missionaries such as Alessandro Valignano S.J. and his more famous pupil Matteo Ricci S.J.

Whenever those exchanges became successful it was from the vantage points of science, technology, and the fine arts: all of these elements established several codes of mutual interest between East and West. In so doing, they helped going beyond acute racism, colonialism, and isolationism. Nonetheless, I approach this topic with plenty of misgivings. One must be careful in using restrictive distinctions between the sacred and the profane, as secular motives (including European imperialism and reactions to it) often intertwine with religion and spirituality¹⁶. The three volumes titled *Stories heard about the West* (1713, *Seiyō Kibun*) provide a good example. This book originates from the ‘dangerous’ conversation between the neo-Confucian scholar and inventive Tokugawa bureaucrat Arai Hakuseki (1657-1725) with the Sicilian missionary Giovanni Sidotti (a priest close to Propaganda Fide, who died in a Japanese prison in 1714). As such, it touches on a number of topics, including economics, agriculture, Christianity, Catholicism, and Buddhism¹⁷. Interestingly, our congress at Palazzo Rucellai and the publication of its proceedings

¹⁵ Ishida Mininosuke, *A Study on the Life of Lang shi-ning (Giuseppe Castiglione)*, «Bijutsu kenkyū», 10 (October 1932), pp. 1-40. G.R. Loehr, *Giuseppe Castiglione (1688-1766), pittore di corte di Ch'ien-Lung imperatore della Cina*, ISMEO, Rome, 1940; Id., *Missionary Artists at the Manchu Court*, «Transactions of the Oriental Ceramic Society», 34 (1962-1963) pp. 51-67.

¹⁶ G.B. Sansom, *Japan. A Short Cultural History*, Cresset Press, London, 1931, pp. 416-428.

¹⁷ G. Fodella, *Uno sguardo su un mondo lontano. Il Giappone dei samurai*, in *Samurai. Opere della Collezione Koelliker e delle Raccolte Extraeuropee del Castello Sforzesco* (exhibition cat. February 25th.-June 2nd. 2009, Milan, Palazzo Reale), ed. G. Piva, Mazzotta, Milan, 2010, pp. 36-37.

are contemporary with Martin Scorsese's movie *Silence* (2016). The latter was filmed in Taiwan and is based on the famous novel by the Catholic Japanese writer Endo Shusaku. The novel and the movie tell us about the collapse of the Catholic and Jesuit mission in Japan during the *shogunate* of Tokugawa Iemitsu (1604-1651). It is a story of profound incomprehension and deep bewilderment; it is, what is more, a story based on the missionary activities of the Sicilian Jesuit Giuseppe Chiara (1602-1685) and (I believe) of the aforementioned Giovanni Sidotti.

From the angle of Jesuit studies and of interactions with the Celestial Empire, the most poignant case of artistic exchange between Italy, Japan, and China was that involving the Jesuit *Scuola dei pittori*, which Giovanni di Niccolo S.J. (1560-1626), a painter from Nola, opened in Japan after 1583. Giovanni (also known as Giovanni Cola, or Giovanni Nicolao) was possibly the author of a *Salvator Mundi* painting that Matteo Ricci presented to the Wanli Emperor in 1601¹⁸.

Among Giovanni's pupils it is important to mention the Japanese Leonardo Kimura S.J. (who sent a noteworthy *Crucifixion* to Rome in 1595), You Wenhui S.J. (Manuel Pereira 1575 -1630), and the Chinese-Japanese Jacobus Niva S.J. (or Niwa, also known as Sacam Jacobus, 1579-1638)¹⁹. At Tokyo University Library one can admire Niva's *Salvator Mundi* painted on copper in 1597 (fig. 2), a work evidently inspired by Western engravings²⁰. In 1602 he painted a *Virgin and St. Luke* for the first Jesuit church in Beijing; between 1610 and 1611 he was at work in Nan'chang, where he decorated the Jesuit

¹⁸ See Sullivan, *The Meeting*, cit., pp. 8-9 and 43. See also A. Cattaneo, *Da Cipangu a Japan. Sguardi incrociati tra Europa e Giappone (1300-1650)*, in *Giappone terra di incanti. Di linea e di colore*, cit., pp. 217-227, in particular p. 221.

¹⁹ Sullivan, *The Meeting*, cit., p. 9.

²⁰ G.A. Bailey, *Jesuit Art and Architecture in Asia*, in *The Jesuits and the Arts 1540-1773*, eds. J.W. O'Malley (S.J.) and G.A. Bailey, St. Joseph's University Press, Philadelphia, 2005, pp. 311-360, in particular p. 319.

Church and the Buddhist Temple that the Wanli Emperor had given as burial place for Matteo Ricci²¹.

Regarding the Macanese Jesuit You Wenhui, we know that after his Japanese based training, he was in Nanjing and in Beijing between 1605 and 1607, where he painted possibly the most famous portrait of Matteo Ricci²², which is now in the Chiesa del Gesù in Rome. Moreover, after the collapse of the Jesuit mission in Japan, several Japanese Catholics settled in Macau ('the Rome of the Orient') and contributed to local art. This is immediately apparent to anyone seeing the decorative parts ornamenting the suggestive ruins of the St. Paul Church designed by the Genoese missionary Carlo Spinola S.J.²³, who died as a martyr at Nagasaki in 1622. Nonetheless, one should not get the impression of severe isolationism for early modern Japan before the arrival of Commodore Perry's 'Black Ships' in 1853.

For instance, we have to take into account the significant impact of Chinese art in Japan under the Tokugawa government. It is of great interest that this Chinese and Confucian influence was mitigated by European ideas (first in such fields as anatomical studies with related illustrations, botany, astronomy, and perspective). Those novelties crossing scientific fields and their depictions came mostly from prints and books transmitted by Dutch merchants in the area of Nagasaki, especially after 1720, when the banning of Western books was lifted. We are talking about the most crucial foreign ascendancy after the already mentioned Alessandro Valignano and the closing of the Jesuit press in Japan (1614)²⁴.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

²² C. Guillén Nuñez, *The portrait of Matteo Ricci*, in *Portrait of a Jesuit. Matteo Ricci 1552-1610*, Macau Ricci Institute, Macau, 2010, pp. 84-97, in particular pp. 85-89.

²³ C. Guillén Nuñez, *Macao's Church of Saint Paul. A Glimmer of the Baroque in China*, Hong Kong University Press, Hong Kong, 2009, pp. 118-119.

²⁴ Sullivan, *The Meeting*, cit., pp. 21-22.

Furthermore, during the Tokugawa government, the newly wealthy classes of pacified Japan came to enjoy different levels of creativity; in other words, artistic inventions had to mirror real life more than the *nanga* or *bunjinga* style of painting, that is, the intellectual, poetic, and imaginary tradition of Chinese intellectual artists (*wenren hua*) largely esteemed in Japan. In point of fact, Japanese artists of the XVIII and early XIX centuries started to use Western realism (as well as other European kinds of input) to implement intellectualized Chinese traditions²⁵. A protagonist of such a ‘debate’ was Shiba Kokan (1747-1818), a great admirer of Western novelties. Shiba’s attitude helps us to qualify the positive evaluation of Western realism by some Japanese artists. Shiba had been a pupil of the scientist and writer Hiraga Gennai (one of the ‘scholars’ of new ‘Dutch’ learning). After mastering the Chinese literary style of painting, he manufactured his own *camera obscura* around 1784. Shiba was very polemical with his fellow countrymen; suffice it to say that he used to mock Chinese-influenced Japanese artists as those who mistake Western painting as merely “another school of art, calling it perspective painting”²⁶. Curiously that Japanese discussion might echo a similar debate stimulated in Beijing by the court painter Zou Yigui evaluating Giuseppe Castiglione’s imperial portraits, realistic depictions of Manchu and Han civil and war costumes, fine horses, exotic animals, landscapes and perspective paintings²⁷.

Michael Sullivan already noticed how Katsushika Hokusai’s drawings for his print *The Rape* (fig. 3) reveal what he calls “a kinship with Western art”, specifically in Hokusai’s “search for the most telling contour”. This is a feature that Sullivan considers similar to seventeenth-century Italian drawings²⁸. For *The Rape*, however, I

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-21.

²⁷ See M. Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, University of California Press, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1999, p. 251.

²⁸ *Id.*, *The meeting*, cit, pp. 34-35.

would emphasize some analogies (or even indirect references) with celebrated late Renaissance engravings modelled after Michelangelo and Raffaello (mostly, vivid depictions of nude bodies positioned in tormented and heroic poses or dramatized draperies). In particular, I am thinking of some figures of women and soldiers fighting against each other designed by Marcantonio Raimondi or by the Florentine sculptor Baccio Bandinelli for his *Massacre of the Innocents* (engraved by Marco Dente before 1525)²⁹. In *The Rape*, the twisted position of the two protagonists' intertwined limbs evoke Bandinelli's inventions, which were in turn influenced by Michelangelo and Raffaello (fig. 4). These details were extensively re-utilized in later engravings, even by Dutch and French artists. The latter served, more likely, as Hokusai's Western sources. In his 1914 seminal text on this Japanese artist, Henri Focillon expressed doubts on Hokusai directly imitating Dutch masters such as Rembrandt. In Hokusai's works the French scholar saw a vague reference to Flemish realism instead³⁰. And yet, Hokusai's wet and heavy draperies in *The Rape* may derive from an Italian source. At the same time Katsushika may have played an 'academic' homage to the legendary Northern Qi dynasty painter Cao Zhongda (end of the VI century A.D.), whose paintings were famous in Chinese fine arts literature for their draped figures (possibly inspired by Buddhist statuary). Those draperies appeared "as though they had been drenched in water", for Cao (perhaps a non-Han artist³¹) was following "the manner of foreign countries", according to the famous Tang dynasty art critic Zhang Yanyuan³².

²⁹ F. Vossilla, *Il colosso di Baccio Bandinelli in piazza della Signoria*, in C. Francini- F. Vossilla, *L'Ercole e Caco di Baccio Bandinelli*, Alinea, Florence, 1999, pp. 9-47, in particular pp. 19-24.

³⁰ H. Focillon, *Hokusai*, Alcan, Paris, 1914 (Italian edition *Abscondita*, Milan, 2003, pp. 72-73).

³¹ Sullivan, *The Arts of China*, cit., p. 133.

³² M. Courtois, *La pittura cinese*, Il Saggiatore, Verona. 1969, p. 18.

It is known that Hokusai had been involved in direct contacts with Dutch sailors around 1795. Likewise, it is known that in 1803 he illustrated Oghitake's book entitled *Stories from Three Countries (Japan, China, and Holland)*³³. I would like to add another case with regard to foreign influences on his exuberant creativity. Once again, mine is a hypothesis to be further investigated. In the sixth volume of his *Manga* albums (started in 1814) dedicated to weapons and warriors, there is a print (fig. 5) depicting the first Portuguese travellers³⁴ who arrived in Japan on a Chinese boat (28 August 1543). Hokusai identifies them as Francisco Zeimoto and António da Mota³⁵. Also, he depicts one of them operating a matchlock or (as the Japanese would say, because of this very episode) a Tanegashima gun. Their exotic clothing, hats, and general appearance remind me of some figures of soldiers and warriors (Chinese, Manchu, Islamic) in the famous set of sixteen copperplates that Giuseppe Castiglione and other Jesuit artists designed for the Qianlong Emperor after 1766 (fig. 6). Entitled the *Victories of the West* and engraved in France after Castiglione had given suggestion on those to be printed in Italy³⁶, these variant and rich battle scenes soon became a model for depicting warriors and conflicts in the Far East³⁷. I wonder, therefore, if Hokusai had a chance to study those Sino-European examples, which had been coordinated by a famous Italian missionary and court painter in China.

Going back to *The Rape*, it is worth remembering that this work is an illustration for a Japanese version of the celebrated Song dynasty long novel *Shui-hu Chuan* (*The Water Margin*, Japanese *Suikoden*)

³³ Focillon, *Hokusai*, cit., p. 73.

³⁴ J. Bouquillard - C. Marquet, *Hokusai. Manga*, L'Ippocampo, Milan, 2007, p. 117, fig. 3.

³⁵ On this, see Cattaneo, *Da Cipangu a Japan*, cit., p. 220.

³⁶ P. Torres, *Le batailles de l'empereur de Chine. La gloire de Qianlong célébrée par Louis XV, un commande royale d'estampes*, Le Passage, Paris, 2009, pp. 17-39.

³⁷ See J. Waley-Cohen, *Commemorating War in Eighteenth-Century China*, «Modern Asian Studies», 30/4 (1996), pp. 869-899.

written either by Shi Naian or Luo Guanzhong. The story takes place in the bellicose Shandong province³⁸. A masterpiece of Chinese vernacular literature, it tells the intricate adventures of a mighty band of 108 misfits, brigands, and tyrant slayers of all sorts. Their hideout is in the legendary Lianshang Marsh; the band leaders are Chao Gai and Song Jiang. The two outlaws are first followed by ‘the Original 7’, then by ‘the 36 Celestial Spirits’, and finally by the ‘72 Earthly Warriors’. The first translations of that Chinese classic to appear (from 1757 onwards) were in Japanese. A famous edition (*The New Illustrated Edition of the Suikoden, Shinpen Suikogaden*) was published in 1805. It involved the aforementioned Hokusai and the great writer Kyokutei Bakin (whom Focillon interestingly compared to Dumas Father)³⁹ in a complicated professional relationship. The first (however partial) translation of the novel in Italian was edited by Alfonso Andreozzi and published in Florence in 1883, bearing the surprising title *Il dente di Buddha (Buddha’s Tooth)*⁴⁰. Alfonso Andreozzi (1821-1894) was a Florentine Risorgimento polymath (journalist, lawyer, and orientalist). One of the very first Italian scholars specialized in Chinese studies, he sympathized for the Carbonari activists and insurgents. After defending Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi in court when the latter was accused of lese-majesty by the Lorraine government of Tuscany, he left Florence for an eventful exile in Paris. There he became a student of the great French sinologist Stanislas Julien.

Moving on now to different artists and different techniques, Toyoharu (1735-1814), the founder of the Utagawa school, employed convergent perspective⁴¹ for his Uki-e prints (‘pictures in per-

³⁸ See G. Bertuccioli, *La letteratura cinese*, ed. F. Casalin, L’asino d’oro Edizioni, Rome, 2013, pp. 283-285.

³⁹ Focillon, *Hokusai*, cit., pp. 84-90.

⁴⁰ A. Andreozzi *Il dente di Buddha, racconto estratto dalla Storia delle Spiagge e letteralmente tradotto dal cinese* Dotti, Florence, 1883. Sonzogno reprinted it in 1985.

⁴¹ See M. Fagioli, *Hiroshige. Paesaggi*, Giulio Gannini e Figlio Editori, Florence,

spective'). Among them is a view of a Dutch city (*The Bell Which Resounds for Ten Thousand Leagues in the Dutch Port of Frankai*), which was actually based on a print (1742) by Antonio Visentini depicting a section of the Canal Grande in Venice. Utagawa Kunyoshi (1798-1861), too, often experimented with Western techniques. Kunyoshi utilized European prints after famous masterpieces as models for his own renditions of Chinese books and themes (for example, to illustrate *24 Paragons of Filial Piety*, a Chinese classic in ethics). In this respect, Sullivan mentions once again Italian landscapes and themes like St. George and the dragon as potential sources⁴², while Fagioli underlines other European models (Arcimboldo and his imitators in Italy or satirical images dating from the French Revolution) for some of Kunyoshi's drawings known as "Grotesque Heads"⁴³.

In 1827, the publisher Kagaya Kichibei asked Kuniyoshi to produce a series of woodblock prints for a new edition of *The Water Margin* (*Tsuzoku Suikoden goketsu hyakuhachinin no hitori*). With regard to Jesuit studies, one must mention Kunyoshi's *Astronomer*, to be identified as Wu Yong (nicknamed "The Wizard"), one of the '36 Celestial Spirits' (fig. 7). The portrait of Wu Yong re-invented by Kuniyoshi was based on images depicting a celebrated Jesuit astronomer and missionary in China: Johann Adam Schall von Bell (1591 Köln - 1666 Beijing). Schall von Bell reformed the Chinese lunar calendar with the aid of the Italian Jesuit Giacomo Rho and of the Chinese Catholic Minister Xu Guangqi⁴⁴. Named after the last Ming Emperor Chongzhen, Schall's calendar provided more accurate predictions

1975, p. 6.

⁴² Sullivan, *The meeting*, cit., pp. 36-37.

⁴³ M. Fagioli, *Una ipotesi sulla fonte europea delle teste grottesche di Kunyoshi*, in *Stampe Giapponesi da Koryusai a Shinsui*, ed. M. Fagioli, Falteri, Florence, 1981, pp. 128-129.

⁴⁴ F. Bortone (S.J.), *I gesuiti alla corte di Pechino (1601-1813)*, Desclée & C. Editori Pontifici, Rome, 1969, pp. 88-95.

of solar and lunar eclipses. Under the Qing dynasty, Schall became Mandarin of the first class by order of the Shunzhi Emperor. He then held the directorship of the Imperial Observatory and the Tribunal of Mathematics in Beijing. The European prints depicting Schall von Bell derived from earlier engraved portraits of Christophorus Clavius, a renowned Jesuit astronomer and a friend of Galileo's. Among those images, it is worth mentioning the Schall portrait in the collection of 'Chinese portraits' produced by Father Jean-Baptiste Du Halde and printed in Paris and The Hague in 1735-1736⁴⁵. The latter can be deemed a plausible model for Utagawa Kuniyoshi (fig. 8-9).

The military defeat of Qing China in the first Opium War in 1842 possibly prompted the Japanese government to avoid a similar military clash with Western powers. Japan abandoned the old ways of the *shogunate* as the imperial throne became stronger by promoting dramatic social reforms. Such reforms included the legalization of private ownership of farm land, conscription, and compulsory education. The old class system of the Tokugawa period was thus abolished, as industrialization became the Mikado's priority in hopes of competing with Western colonialist powers in Far East Asia. Significantly, foreign advisors from France, Germany, and Great Britain were employed by the Meiji government to facilitate the modernization of the country.

However, several artists criticized this daring attempt at modernization. A case in point is a print by Kawanabe Kyōsai (1831-1889) entitled *School for Spooks (Bake-Bake Gakkō)*⁴⁶. Dating from after 1872, it shows a caricature of compulsory education. For a number

⁴⁵ See F. Morena, *Cineseria. Evoluzioni del gusto per l'Oriente in Italia dal XIV al XIX secolo*, Centro Di, Florence, 2009, p. 60.

⁴⁶ See Dōshin Satō, *Modern Japanese Art and the Meiji State, The Politics of Beauty*, Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles 1999, pp. 324-327, 329-330. One should also mention Kawanabe Gyosai's autobiography/handbook on painting (1884), which is available in English; see Fagioli, *Utagawa Kuniyoshi*, cit., p. 12.

of reasons, it may be regarded as a *kyōga* (crazy picture)⁴⁷. Demons of various types are learning the new vocabulary for daily life as some of them, trying to enter the classroom, are blown away by the Wind God. The teacher is the King of the Ghosts and general of 80.000 demons: the Chinese Zhong Kui, known as Shoki in Japan. It is particularly interesting that Kawanabe Kyōsai depicts Shoki wearing a Western-style uniform instead of his traditional Chinese robes.

In those decades, the newly born Kingdom of Italy was of some help to the Japanese school system, especially from 1872 onwards. Italians (for instance, Edoardo Chiossone, Antonio Fontanesi, Giovanni Vincenzo Cappelletti)⁴⁸ contributed mostly in the academic realm of the visual arts and its education, a field then addressed in Europe and America as fine arts or *beaux arts* (Japanese *bijutsu*)⁴⁹; basically, an innovative notion for Japanese neo-Confucian mentality. There were also peculiar cases, such as General Scipione Braccialini, who advised Japanese colleagues on how to establish a costal line of defence. Even more remarkable was Alessandro Paternostro, a Sicilian lawyer who worked in Japan from 1889 to 1892 as judicial advisor; eventually, he was received by the Emperor, who awarded him a medal⁵⁰. In such a vibrant context, another important figure was Vincenzo Ragusa (Palermo, 1841 – Palermo, 1927). A former Garibaldi volunteer (just like the Anglo-Florentine Frederick Stibbert) Ragusa was among the founders of the “Istituto d’Arte di Palermo”, which would then be named after him and his Japanese wife Otama Kiyohara. Between 1876 and 1882, as Buddhist statuary was declining, Ragusa intro-

⁴⁷ See Dōshin Satō, *Modern Japanese Art*, cit., p. 324.

⁴⁸ See B. Rupert, *Viaggi reali e viaggi immaginari. Erranza e descrizione della natura nella letteratura giapponese dalla tradizione al periodo Meiji (1868-1912)*, in *Ineffabile perfezione: la fotografia del Giappone, 1860-1910*, cit., pp. 337-349, in particular pp. 337-338.

⁴⁹ See Dōshin Satō, *Modern Japanese Art*, cit., pp. 74-77.

⁵⁰ See M.G. Losano, *Alle origini della filosofia del diritto in Giappone: Il corso di Alessandro Paternostro a Tokyo nel 1889*, Lexis, Torino, 2016, pp. 24-25, 26 n.41.

duced Italian technologies for sculpture and related teaching methods (i.e., bronze casting, wood carving, modelling clay and plaster, wire skeletons for models and the like) into the Japanese school system. In 1876, he was one of the very first foreign teachers and consultants chosen by the Meiji government to work at *Kobu Bijutsu Gakko* (The Technological Art School, which would then become The Tokyo Institute of Technology)⁵¹. Ragusa also worked for the Industrial School of Arts at Yokohama. This city became famous for its many important workshops run by Japanese and Western photographers, such as the Anglo-Greek-Italian Felice Beato, who spent his last days in Florence. One of Ragusa's students, Okuma Ujihiro (1856-1934), spent a year in Rome to study. His masterpiece is a monument dedicated to Omura Masujiro, the founder of the modern Japanese army, at Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo. Dating from 1883-1893, this artwork shows obvious Italian traits; Sullivan calls it “completely European in all but its subject”⁵². On the contrary, Ragusa's own works situate his style beyond so-called ‘Orientalism’; his realism (possibly parallel to Vincenzo Gemito's), which proved exotic to Japanese patrons and beholders at the time⁵³, is what most appeals to us after so many decades. A good example is his *The Japanese Actor* or *Japanese Woman* (fig. 10).

Ragusa, Okuma and Naganuma Shūkei (1857-1942), who spend many years in Italy (1881-1887)⁵⁴, were somehow the standard-bearers of this special relationship between Japan and Italy in the field of portraits and monuments. It is fair to say that they represented a sculpture school distinct from the massive impact that Rodin (and, more generally, France) had in Japan at the beginning of the XX century.

⁵¹ Sullivan, *The Meeting*, cit., pp. 130-131.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 130.

⁵³ See O. Miglio, *Vincenzo Ragusa, artista siciliano tra Tokyo e Yokohama*, «Agorà», 45 (2013), pp. 46-50, in particular pp. 48-49.

⁵⁴ See Sullivan. *The Meeting*, cit., p. 132.

Several Chinese intellectuals from the last decade of the 19th century (such as Li Hongzhang, Zhang Zhidong, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and Huang Zunxian) were strongly impressed by Meiji Japan. As Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909) urged Chinese students to go to Japan to learn the latest Western technologies and a pragmatic attitude to creativity, Kang Youwei (1858-1927) became the leader of the nationalistic movement that would establish a constitutional monarchy in China. Kang visited Italy; while in Naples he was deeply impressed by a monumental statue of Camillo Benso, Count of Cavour. Kang called Cavour the greatest European genius of that time. He wrote that the statue in Naples showed Cavour “with the strong body of a God descending on earth to rescue Italy”. Kang was so moved by this inspirational monument that he expressed hope that China would one day find its own Cavour⁵⁵.

For writer and journalist Liang Qichao (1873-1929), the major flaw of China’s old historians was their failure to foster a deep national awareness like the Japanese had. In his eyes, such awareness was necessary to bring about a stronger, modern China. Liang was calling for the rise of historical consciousness among Chinese intellectuals. He thus supported the “Great Man Theory” in his 1899 book *Heroes and their Times* (*Yīngxióng yǔ Shíshì*), in which he gathered biographies of European statesmen such as Otto von Bismarck, Horatio Nelson, Oliver Cromwell, Lajos Kossuth, Giuseppe Mazzini, and Camillo Benso. Liang Qichao even wrote a musical drama entitled *Xin Luoma* (*La nuova Roma*), in which he closely compared Italy and China. Among its protagonists are Garibaldi, Cavour, and Dante, who all appear as characters of Chinese opera⁵⁶.

At the beginning of this essay I mentioned Taiwan. I would like to conclude my list of artistic intersections between Japan, China, and Italy by briefly introducing the case of a great Taiwanese sculptor,

⁵⁵ See Bertuccioli, *La letteratura cinese*, cit., pp. 313-316.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 316-317.

who happens to be almost unknown in Italy. Huang Tushui (1895-1930)⁵⁷ was born in Taiwan during the Japanese occupation, which lasted till 1945. After winning over China in the Sino-Japanese conflict of 1894-1895, the Japanese administration established a school system that was meant to transform Formosa into a province of the Empire of the Sun. Many talented Taiwanese artists thus had a chance to study under Japanese teachers or in Japanese technical schools. Huang Tushui won an Imperial prize in 1919 thanks to his *Indigenous boy playing a flute with his nostrils* (fig. 11), a statue (now lost) that reminds me a great deal of Vincenzo Gemito's realism (for example, *The Young Fisherman*). Like his *Shakyamuni Buddha* and many expressive images of animals, Huang's *Indigenous boy* displays references to French art, Buddhist statuary, and – last but not least – his teacher in Tokyo, that is, Takamura Kōun (1852-1934). The latter was a master at portraying animals, as one can easily notice from *The Monkey* (exhibited at the Chicago World Fair in 1893, now at the Tokyo National Museum)⁵⁸. It is still to be investigated whether the legacy of Vincenzo Ragusa lasted until Huang Tushui's formative years. If so, it would be fair to detect traces of an Italian influence on such an interesting sculptor, who certainly deserves wide international reputation.

⁵⁷ Xie Lifa, 日據時代臺灣美術運動史 (*History of the Taiwan Fine Arts Movement during the Japanese Administration*), Artiste, Taipei, 2011, pp. 32-40.

⁵⁸ Sullivan, *The Meeting*, cit., p. 130.

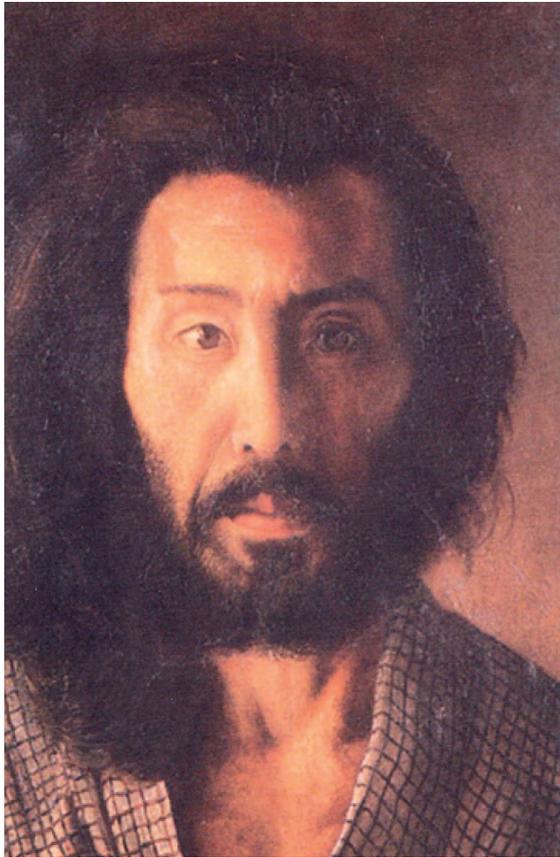


Fig. 1. Yokoyama Matsusaburo, *Self-portrait*, after 1881, coloured photograph (from *Ineffabile perfezione: la fotografia del Giappone, 1860-1910*, exhibition cat. Oct. 23rd. 2010 - Feb. 27th 2011, Lugano, Museo delle Culture, eds. F.P. Campione and M. Fagioli, Giunti, Florence, 2010, p. 318).



Fig. 2. Jacobus Niva S.J., *Salvator Mundi* 1597,
Tokyo University Library, oil on copper.



Fig. 3. Hokusai Katsushika, *Drawing for the print The Rape*, Private Collection, United States of America, brush drawing.

Fig. 4. Marco Dente after a drawing of Baccio Bandinelli, *Massacre of the Innocents*, 1525. Private Collection, Italy, engraving.



Fig. 5. Hokusai Katsushika, *Francisco Zeimoto and Antônio da Mota*, *Manga*, vol. 6, after 1814.



Fig. 6. Augustin de Saint-Aubin after a drawing of Giuseppe Castiglione S.J., *The Battle at Tonguzluq*, 1766. Private Collection, Italy, copper engraving.



Fig. 7. Utagawa Kunyoshi, Wu Yong, the Wizard Star of the 108 Heroes of The Water Margin, *Tsūzoku Suikoden gōketsu hyakuhachinin no hitori*, 1827-1830. Private Collection, Italy, woodblock print; ink and color on paper.



Fig. 8. Jan Hendrick Glazemaker, *P. Adam Schall Germanus*, in *Tooneel van China ...*, printed in Amsterdam by Johannes Janssonius van Waesberge, 1668. Private Collection, Italy.



Fig. 9. Jean-Baptiste Du Halde S.J. *Johann Adam Schall von Bell*, from *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise, enrichie des cartes générales et particulieres de ces pays, de la carte générale et des cartes particulieres du Thibet, & de la Corée; & ornée d'un grand nombre de figures & de vignettes gravées en tailedouce*, Paris and The Hague, 1736.



Fig. 10. Vincenzo Ragusa, *Japanese Woman*, 1881, Tokyo National Museum, bronze.
 Fig. 11. Huang Tushui, *Indigenous boy playing a flute with his nostrils*, 1919 (now lost), clay.