

150 Years of Oriental Studies at Ca' Foscari

edited by Laura De Giorgi and Federico Greselin

Japanese Teachers at the Royal School of Commerce (1873-1923)

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Abstract Only five years after the Royal High School of Commerce (the present Ca' Foscari University) was founded in 1868, the School introduced, for the first time in Italy, Japanese language courses taught by native speakers. The classes started in 1873 and continued until 1888, and were again part of the curriculum from 1909 to 1923. In those years a little number of very active Japanese teachers (interprets, linguists, sculptors and painters) contributed to shaping the education in Japanese of Italian students, who in turn went on to direct Japanese instruction in Italy. Their guiding spirit was Guglielmo Berchet, a tireless promoter of Italo-Japanese relations.

Keywords Japanese language instruction. Ca' Foscari University. Italian-Japanese relations. Japanese cartography. History of Venice.

Four Years to Remember

1867 In Venice, the vice president of the Province, Edoardo Deodati, writes to Luigi Luzzati (a young politician, future Prime Minister in 1910-11) regarding the upcoming opening of the Suez Canal, asking that a Vocational School for economic operators be established in the city, in order to “re-establish those commercial relations with the East, which so deeply influenced the past greatness of our city, and through which it will rise again, on the economic side, too” (cited in Berengo 1989).


A plea that was not ignored, considering that the soon-to-be mayor Antonio Fornoni suggests that “the city council ignores which use should be attributed to the majestic Foscari Palace, and notes that it could be very much suited for the School. It is a venue that could be used for the greatest University”. The Palace “in the channel’s vault” is, to this day, the prestigious location of the University.

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1868 *La Gazzetta di Venezia* of 1 February reports that on the night of 31 January, at the Venetian Athenaeum, Luzzatti presented his ideas regarding an ambitious project that aims to make Venice a focal point for economic studies, similar to the one created in Pisa for Letters and Natural Sciences Studies. The project involves the Provincial Council, the City Council, the Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Commerce. The Royal Decree regarding the foundation of the School is emitted on the 6th of August of the same year, with 1868-69 being its first academic year. On 23 October, after two and a half centuries of closure, Japan open its doors to the World. The sixteen-year old Emperor, Mutsuhito, moves from Kyōtō to the new capital, Tōkyō. Thus begins the Meiji period, which will see its end in 1912.

1869 Opening of the Suez Canal. Venice was the ideal harbour in the Mediterranean for Austria, Germany and Italy to establish commercial relations with the East, which role was strongly suggested by Alessandro Fè d'Ostiani, plenipotentiary minister of the Italian Government in Tōkyō, who was highly regarded by the Emperor.¹ Not least, an important part of these commercial interest was the need to facilitate the arrival of boxes of silkworm eggs to face the pebrine epidemic that was devastating those years' silk production.²

1873 Opening of the Consulate General on 9 May. Thus, Venice became the first city in Europe to host a Japanese consulate.³ Even though it did not last for a long time - in march of the next year it was first moved to Milan and then to Marseille, while the one in Venice remained as an honorary consulate - this event gave great visibility to the city and put it in a privileged position in the eyes of the politicians in Tōkyō.⁴

1 Alessandro Fè d'Ostiani (Brescia 1852-Roma 1905) is an important figure in the history of the Japanese-Italian relations. After being awarded a Law Degree from the University of Vienna, he was appointed to several diplomatic roles in Rio de Janeiro, Paris and China, before being transferred to Tōkyō in October 1870. He was extremely popular in the Japanese capital, so much that this anecdote on him circulated: "Our minister is so well known in that city, despite its great size, that it is sufficient to say 'Italian Minister' to make the *ginrikisha* [*jinrikisha* rickshaw guy] leave as fast as possible for his destination. And that's not true for the other Foreign Ministers, as, for example, the Russian one has to say 'Italian Minister' in order to be brought to his house, which is close to our Minister's" (Graffagni 1877, 174; Author's translation).

2 Claudio Zanier is a true expert in the subject, being the author of many essays (see, among others, Zanier 2006).

3 The previous consulates were established in S. Francisco (1870), New York, Shanghai and Fushu (1872).

4 On 18 May 1873, *La Gazzetta di Venezia* indicates the Guccioli Palace in San Samuele as the building chosen to host the consulate.

On 27 May of the same year Iwakura Tomomi – plenipotentiary minister and head of the ‘Iwakura Mission’, the delegation sent by the first Meiji government who visited the United States and Europe for 18 months between 1871 and 1873 – arrived in the city. The official escort of the Iwakura Mission in Italy was Fè d’Ostiani. The mission, constituted of fifty members, had the principal purposes of obtaining a review of the treaties, connecting with the governments of the fifteen visited countries, and in particular of familiarising with the western reality (for general information see also Istituto Giapponese di Cultura 1994). Not everyone from the delegation came to Venice, but so did Iwakura, who remained in the city for a few days, during which he not only visited Venice as a tourist, but also gave his patronage to the Japanese language teaching project.

On 30 November 1873, the Japanese language courses (which had started its academic activity just five years before) started at the High School of Commerce with a solemn celebration.⁵ In addition to the regular course based on theoretical and practical teachings for commercial operators, teachers of economic subjects, and the specialists of a so-called “Consular Section”, there was the new possibility of studying foreign languages – western and eastern – because, as Luzzatti said, “in order to know ourselves, to better ourselves, it is better to study those modern languages which are used in modern negotiations rather than studying ancient languages, which deal with the negotiation of ancient matters” (*La Gazzetta di Venezia*, 1 December 1873).⁶

La Gazzetta di Venezia gave a detailed account of the ceremony, and it is easy to understand the role held by Fè d’Ostiani, highlighted by the words of the comm. Ferrara, who, in addition to suggesting and promoting the project, offered the services of his secretary Yoshida Yōsaku, who became the first Japanese language teacher in Venice.⁷ Yoshida himself participated in the ceremony with a well-received speech in French. Yoshida Yōsaku, who remained in Venice from 1873 to 1875, had enrolled in 1865 at the Collège Japonais-Français of Yokohama, and spent some time abroad in France. He became the official interpreter for the Royal Italian Legation in

5 On the one hand, Venice was the first city to hold Japanese language classes in a High School; moreover, these classes were taught by native speakers and aimed to educate future commercial operators. On the other hand, in Florence, which can be considered the birthplace of Far Eastern Studies in Italy since the second half of 1800, the purely philological approach, or anthropological, was prevalent and it pertained mainly the scholar elite. However, Japanese was not the first Oriental language to be taught in Venice: there were colloquial Arabic classes (Professor abbot Raffaele Giarue from Aleppo) from 1868 to 1889, and Turkish classes (Professor Zuchdi Effendi) from 1869 to 1877.

6 All the quotations retrieved from *La Gazzetta di Venezia* and other Italian sources have been translated by the Author into English.

7 The news spread beyond Venice and abroad. *La Gazzetta* reports the reactions from *Il Sole* of Milan and from the English *The London and China Express*.

Tōkyō, together with Fè d'Ostiani, and, after leaving Venice,⁸ he operated as a ministerial clerk in Holland, Korea, the Philippines and in Germany. Once he returned to Japan, in 1890, he was nominated counsellor to the Imperial Household.⁹

The *Gazzetta* informs its readers:

10 December, 1873. City news. Japanese language classes. We delightfully observe that these classes at the High School of Commerce are attended by more than 40 people, and that they proceed with order and appreciation, so much that the students demanded and obtained evening classes during non-working days. If this kind of enthusiasm was to manifest in other areas with the same fervour, it would be of good auspice for the commercial future of our country.

The following month:

14 January, 1874. Yesterday evening the Italian Minister to Japan [Fè d'Ostiani], unexpectedly joined a Japanese language class, sitting among the students. He stayed for the whole lesson, and in the end expressed not only his satisfaction regarding the work of the egregious Professor [Yoshida], but also his praise towards the students for their very fast improvement.

Before starting to talk about the succession of professors who held the teaching post at Ca' Foscari, it seems right and proper to mention a fundamental actor in those years' context: Guglielmo Berchet, honorary consul and indispensable helper to the Japanese people both residing in or just visiting Venice. He came from a family of French descent who had moved to Venice, and was born on 3 July 1833. He graduated with a law degree from the University of Padua, but was interested in particular in the history of Venice, about which he studied historical documents and past testaments, then shifting his interest towards the East.¹⁰ Active member of the Vene-

8 It could be interesting to know whether Fè d'Ostiani had a say in deciding the conspicuous salary received by Yoshida. The Japanese teacher made 7.000 liras, against the 3.000 and 2.000 liras made by his German and French colleagues. Even the Italian teachers rarely received such high salaries (cf. Berengo 1989, 61 fn. 35).

9 He also served as a guide to H.R.H. Tomaso, Duke of Genoa, during his well-received visit to Japan. Tomaso, who had arrived on 8 August 1879 as the captain of the *Vettor Pisani*, remained in Japan until 13 January 1881, visiting the Japanese coasts for a year (cf. di Russo 2003, 157-75).

10 His bibliography consists of about fifty essays, among which "About Venetian Merchants in Asia" (Berchet 1864) and "Report on Venetian Consuls in Syria" (1866). A monumental work of his, to which he committed for twenty-four years, was the curatorship of

tian Institute of Sciences, Literature and Arts from 1880, he was elected its secretary for life in 1897. He was amongst the founding members of the Venetian Institute of National History, of which he became secretary at first, and then president. From 1866 to 1875 he edited *La Gazzetta di Venezia*, the major newspaper in the city. It is not known when his passion regarding Japan began, and passion it was, indeed. Maybe it was thanks to his research, urged by Iwakura's visit to the State Archives, about the documents regarding the Japanese diplomatic missions in Italy in 1585 and 1616 (Berchet 1877). He was nominated Honorary Consul in 30 September 1880 and served until his death on 15 June 1913. Even in those years in which he did not have an official role, he was upfront in every event that involved the Land of the Rising Sun; careful in assisting the Japanese residents, with whom he had a consolidated friendship; an excellent guide to tourists; present to every commercial exchange; active in organising meetings and managing networking; a sponsor for the presence of Japan at the International Art Exhibitions; and a delegate for the Geographical Society of Tōkyō at the International Geographical Exhibition that was held in Venice in 1881.

All these events happened in the context of an energetic political and cultural life that animated Venice in those years, and revolved around its historical poles: the Frari State Archive, the Biblioteca Marciana, the Venetian Institute of Sciences, Literature and Arts, The Querini Stampalia Foundation; it also revolved around local personalities such as Antonio Fradeletto and Riccardo Selvatico, amongst the creators of the Biennale d'Arte;¹¹ Filippo Grimani, enlightened mayor who served from 1895 to 1919; artists like the sculptors Antonio Dal Zotto (1852-1918)¹² and Luigi Ferrari, who served for years as director of the Royal Institute of Fine Arts; Pompeo Molmenti, politician and historian,¹³ Rinaldo Fulin, philologist and erudite, just to name a few; in addition to the above mentioned Edoardo Deodati, Luigi Luzzatti, and the economist Francesco Ferrara.

Marino Sanudo's *Diaries*, an impressive 58 volumes work, in collaboration with others (Sanuto [1496-1533] 1879-1902).

11 Initially called "Esposizione Internazionale d'Arte della Città di Venezia", it was established in 1895 on the occasion of the 25th wedding anniversary of King Umberto I to Queen Margherita.

12 Antonio Dal Zotto (1852-1918), professor at the School of Arts Applied to Industry in 1870, in 1879 joined the Fine Arts Academy where he taught for forty-five years. He sculpted the statue of Carlo Goldoni in Campo San Bartolomeo and was teacher to Nagayama Moriyoshi.

13 Pompeo Gherardo Molmenti (1852-1928), successful journalist and politician, dedicated many of his historical and artistic pieces to Venice, amongst which an essay on the personal life of Venetians (Molmenti 1879). For further information about him, see a recent work by Monica Donaglio (2004).

Following Yoshida, five more teachers were part of the School, before the interruption caused by a lack of funds: Ogata Korenao, 1876-77; Kawamura Kiyoo, 1878-79 to 1880-81; Naganuma Moriyoshi, 1881-82 to 1886-87; Itō Heizō, 1887-79 to 1880-88.¹⁴ Classes resumed for about fifteen years from 1908-09, with the painter Terasaki Takeo as the teacher and funds from the Chamber of Commerce. Ogata, Kawamura, Naganuma and Terasaki were all people of high calibre who deserve a special mention, especially Ogata and his peculiar story.¹⁵

Born in 1853, Korenao was the tenth son of a famous physician from Osaka, Okata Kōan. He attended, like Yoshida, the Collège Japonais-Français in Yokohama, founded in 1865, and was then a recipient of scholarship in France. Once he came back to Japan, he was chosen to be the interpreter at the World Exhibition of 1873 in Vienna; he was then in Turin at the International Institute. When he was only twenty-two, he had already been to Europe three times. Finally, he arrived in Venice in 1875, when he enrolled in the Royal High School of Commerce in order to attend a 'consular course', and at the same time accepted the position of teacher of Japanese language, succeeding Yoshida. However, he held this position for a short period of time, as he died of scurvy on 4 April 1878, just a few days after converting to Christianity (with Guglielmo as his Christian name) and marrying the Venetian Maria Giovanna Gerotti, with whom he had had a daughter, Eugenia Gioconda, born in their house near Ponte dei Pugni in Dorsoduro.¹⁶

The child's godfather was Guglielmo Berchet, as the documents show, and it was Berchet himself who arranged for Korenao's body to be retrieved from the mass grave where it was initially put, in order to give him a proper burial at his expenses in the cemetery of San Michele in Isola. Moreover, he appointed the sculptor Naganuma Moriyoshi to decorate his grave.¹⁷ The citizens' moved response and participation to the young man's funeral service can be seen through the words reported in *La Gazzetta* of

14 Itō Heizō was the only one to have nothing but a feeble influence on Venice, but, as an Italian literature scholar, once he returned to Japan he taught an Italian literature course at the Tōkyō School of Foreign Languages (Tōkyō Gaigo), and in 1910 published an Introduction to the Reading of Italian Language for Japanese Students.

15 The bibliography regarding these topics is vast; for one of the most complete texts focused on the relations between Venice and Japan see Ishii 2004.

16 The most detailed account in Italian of Korenao's life is Daitō 1976-77, which reports: "The *Liber Baptizatorum* of S. Maria del Carmine in Venice, on 24 September, 1877, records the baptism of Eugenia Gioconda born on the 10th of the same month, daughter of the pagan Corenao Ogata and Maria Gerotti, godfather Guglielmo Berchet" (Author's translation).

17 The tomb (fence II, vertical recess 74, row 4) is a burial recess, in the centre of which Naganuma placed Korenao's profile in a medallion. Korenao's name figures both in Latin alphabet (Corenao [sic]) and in Chinese characters. Notably, the first character of the two that form his name, *kore*, is wrongly written. It is thanks to the painter Beppu Kan'ichirō's

6 April 1978, and through Carraro's speech, which once again exalts the importance of the commercial relationship between the two countries:

This young man, whose death we are mourning, was a son of that Far East which, closed for centuries in his most ancient civilization, has just come in frequent and fructuous contact with the western civilization. The relationship with Japan started to grow strong in 1845, because of the illness that impacted our silkworms; the Italians, bearing the purpose of getting the hold of healthy silkworm eggs, which were fairly abundant there, were amongst those who took advantage of the opening of some of the Japanese harbours to international commerce, which was before restricted to just one harbour open to Holland. Moreover, this relationship flourished thanks to the revolution happened in Japan, in which the element who so strongly vetoed any contact with foreigners succumbed, and the power fell into the hands of those who do not fear to join their efforts with ours in order to promote a ever growing progress for all the members of the human family. We cherish and encourage those efforts, and we believe that thanks to them, numerous and more important results will come.

For the current purpose, it is enough to mention that the connections between Japan and Italy grew, consolidated and became more current, and with them came the urgent necessity to understand each other. This being the situation, it would have seemed like a shortcoming for our School, had it not created a Japanese language tenure.

Thus it was created, and the post initially went to the egregious Professor Yoshida. However, three years later, having had to return to Japan to deal with some personal matters, he managed to have his compatriot Korenao Ogata nominated as his substitute; Ogata, who had come to Venice in order to learn more about the Italian language and our political and economic institutions, had been teaching with a positive outcome to a good number of students when he suddenly died.

His good heart, his alacrity and acumen, his most tranquil attitude, his loyalty and generosity, his poised manner, which maybe revealed the ancient and innate civility of his race, had gifted him with a large number of friends and estimators between us colleagues and acquaintances. We hope that all these qualities, which he most certainly shared with his compatriots, as its is universally known, will bring, more than the reconciliation of mere individuals, the growth of our commercial relation, the reciprocal exchange of every kind of idea, the knowledge and diffusion proper of the civilized world. [...]

research, who lived for a long time in Venice in the last century, that his tomb was traced and cleaned, and is now a frequently visited place.

Farewell, for the last time, unfortunate stranger, symbol of the fraternity of peoples, example of honest and useful industry, assurance for the hoped fusion between different and distant civilizations, earnest of useless fatigues and beginnings of a bond between yet unknown interests; farewell, excellent youngster, we will send your last farewell to your desperate mother, to your brothers, to your beloved land; we will send that farewell that you, in your anguished agony, could not send, but which we are sure wandered through your tired mind and lied on your trembling lips.

Ogata was succeeded from 1878 to 1881 by Kawamura Kiyoo, a painter, who had studied in Paris before arriving in Venice in 1876, when he enrolled in the Academy of Fine Arts, which he attended for many years, even receiving a few awards, and where he had the occasion to become acquainted with both Italian and foreign artists like Oreste da Molin, Ettore Tito and the Spanish Martin Rico Ortega. He was fairly active in the teaching of Japanese, so much that his teaching programme was added to the report of the Directive Council that was presented in May 1881 at the Milan National Exhibition.

In September 1881, the International Geographical Exhibition was held. Berchet undertook the task of drafting the catalogue. Once the Exhibition ended, the artefacts remained in Italy, as they were previously been donated to various institutions. *La Gazzetta* reports:

Remarkable gift from the Japanese government. All the artefacts and all the collections, sent by the Japanese government to the Geographical Exhibition, will remain in Italy. The Japanese Consul in Venice, *comm.* [*commendatore*] Berchet, by order of that government, consigned the great Map of the Japanese Empire to the Venetian City Hall, Map that had earned the selection of the international Panel, and it was asked that it will be collocated in the Civic Museum, as a reminder of Japan's participation to the Geographical Exhibition; he consigned to the Royal High School of Commerce the entire collection of minerals, soil specimens, stones, carbons, etc. which can be found in Japan, a collection assembled to satisfy many Industries' interest; he consigned to the Meteorological Observatory a 21 volumes collection of meteorological and astronomical observations recorded in different stations throughout Japan.

He also sent:

To the Geological Museum in Florence, the Japanese birds and amphibious collection, together with photographs of Saghalin's Ainos;

To the Prehistoric Museum in Rome, the most interesting collection of remains of the human industry and fossil shells dug in Omori and Hidatchi;

To the Italian Geographic Society, the collection of 98 maps drawn by the Japanese Hydrographic Bureau;



Figure 1. The maps *Nihon zenkoku* (Representation of Japan as a whole) donated by the Consul of Japan. University of Venice, Department of Asian and North-African Studies, Director's Office (photograph by the Editor, May 2018)

To the Ministry of Public Works, the great map of the Lighthouses on the Japanese coast, equipped with manuals;

To the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, all that it was left, meaning geographical and topographical maps, books, collections, a complete herbal of 720 Japanese plants, the works and papers of the University and Normal School of Tōkyō, etc., with the request of implementing their distribution to the various Italian Institutes.¹⁸

18 The collection of stuffed birds was registered in the Geological Museum of Florence by Enrico Hilyer Giglioli, director of the Natural History Museum La Specola. Giglioli, naturalist and ethnographer, had circumnavigated the Earth together in 1866-68 with Vittorio Arminion and Filippo de Filippi aboard the pirocorvette *Magenta*, which stationed in Japan in July and August 1866.

The map here defined as the “great Map of the Japanese Empire” comprises of two coloured maps (fig. 1), with the caption (right to left, horizontal) *Nihon zenkoku* ‘Representation of Japan as a whole’. Edited by the Monbushō, the Ministry of Education, they are dated Meiji 10, ninth month (September 1878). One of them (173 × 269 cm) depicts Kyūshū with the surrounding islands, Shikoku, western Honshū up to the Kii peninsula, Tsushima and, in a square below, the Ryūkyū Islands. Korea is just outlined. The other one (176 × 270 cm) depicts Honshū until the Tsugaru Strait, and the Sado Island. In a square above, under the scroll, Hokkaidō and the Kuril Islands.

The maps were then moved from the City Hall to the Royal School of Commerce, where they were put into storage as rolls for decades, before being transferred to the Library of the present-day Ca' Foscari University. During the '80s, one of them was preserved in the Geography Institute, and the other in the Japanese Language and Literature Institute in Ca' Cappello, where they were reunited as a pair a few years later. Nowadays, the maps have been restored and are exhibited in the Director's office at the Department of East Asian Studies in Palazzo Vendramin dei Carmini,¹⁹ where they are admired by visitors, among them also representatives of Japanese television companies.

Again in 1881, the Project of the High School of Commerce in Venice reports:

To these subjects [statistics, economics, maritime law, history of commerce] we would add the teaching of foreign languages, especially English, German, French and Spanish; however, what would make the Venetian School unique, and attract not only a large number of Italian students, but also English, French and Germans, and give it the characteristics of a European school, as it is the commerce that it wants to represent, is the teaching of Oriental Languages. The well-known Mekhitarists fathers, who have been living on a little Island in the Venetian Lagoon for years, offered to teach, for a modest price, those Oriental Languages of which they are illustrious scholars. The City Hall has already accepted the offer, and it would like to implement these classes at the Superior Institute of Commerce in Venice, where, as a consequence, modern Greek, Arab, and Persian would take their place alongside western languages. Modern Greek and Arab would very much be the key to a new continent, and the Venetian school would be, thanks to them, a real Polytechnic specialized in European and Oriental languages for

¹⁹ At the time (2007) an independent institution, the Dipartimento di Studi sull'Asia Orientale (DSAO) was in 2011 one of the founding components of the present-day Department of Asian and North-African Studies, whose Director's Office was in the same premises as DSAO's [Editor's note].

commerce. This would also offer the mean for the Government to educate its consuls, so that, before leaving for those distant countries, they would have already mastered the languages there spoken. And, when the gigantic endeavour of the making of the Suez Isthmus is completed, Venice, with its High School of Commerce, will not only match Antwerp, but also surpass it, and, with its excellent teaching tradition, with these Oriental Languages, will become the real nurturer as well the very archive of all the commercial relations with the East, as demanded by the memory of our past and the hopes of the future. (*La R. Scuola di Commercio in Venezia* 1881, 78-9; Author's translation)

Let us go back to the teachers. From 1881, it was the sculptor Naganuma Moriyoshi who held the post until 1887.²⁰ He was one of Vincenzo Ragusa's students in Tōkyō, at the Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō (School of Industrial Arts), and, once in Venice, he attended classes at the Royal Institute of Fine Arts, starting from January 1882.²¹

He took part in the National Exhibition of Fine Arts in 1887 in Venice, presenting a successful (but nowadays lost) gypsum sculpture called *Al Lido*,²² which portrayed a young boy bent over, left knee on the ground, with his right arm raised and turned backwards, holding a sea shell just picked up from the beach. Berchet himself ensured that the news spread in

20 In his memories, published in 1936, Naganuma complains that the School only paid him two thousand liras, compared to Kawamura's seven thousand, due to the fact that Kawamura was also the recipient of a generous scholarship from the Japanese Government, which consisted of six thousand liras. Only after three months did Naganuma obtain a raise in his salary, which was brought to three thousand liras per month. However, the most interesting part is the one regarding the fact that, even though he did not regard himself as suited to be a Japanese language teacher, he was the first to teach the "Chinese characters, which I think are fundamental in order to read our language", since Kawamura only taught the alphabetic katakana (cited in Ishii 2004, 39).

21 The speech - on the occasion of the closing lecture for the a.y. 1883-84 - by the Academy Secretary Domenico Fadiga regarding the situation of western art in Japan, proves how strong the artistic bond between Venice and Japan already was. "I will just briefly discuss how, a few years ago, under the patronage of our ambassador count Fè d'Ostiani, a sort of Academy was established in Tōkyō, and how, in order to manage it, three professors were sent from Italy, one for architecture [Cappelletti], one for painting [Fontanesi], and the third one for sculpture [Ragusa]: the new-born institute, however young, seemed able to take root (except for architecture, as it was in competition with the already existing Polytechnic), and the schools were well attended; the reason why this experience, as many others before, failed, I do not know. As of today, therefore, the only exponents of the future monumental artistic development of that country are our Naganuma, in Venice, and another student, who at the same time attends the Academy in Rome [Matsuoka Isashi, with Cesare Maccari]" (*Atti* 1884, 39; Author's translation). An account of Naganuma activities in Venice can be found in Ishii 2001.

22 *La Gazzetta* reports it on 28 September 1887. The original title was meant to be *Al Lido* (with a clear reference to the Venetian beach), but Berchet translated it into French as *Au Lido*, which became *Orido* in the Japanese transliteration, losing then the initial meaning.

Japan, as he sent a praise letter written in French to the *Jiji shinpo* newspaper.²³ The only creation of Naganuma now left in Venice is the bas-relief of Ogata Korenao's profile on his grave in San Michele, as said before. However, his presence and works were fundamental in order to organise the Japanese participation in the second edition of the International Art Exhibition in 1897.

In the meantime, once Itō Heizō had ended his teaching period (1887-88) at the School, the Japanese language classes were interrupted because of a lack of funds, with great regret from the academic authorities and disappointment for the numerous students who were attending these classes. Indeed, the seed had been sown, and the first results were starting to show. On 18 March 1886, Agostino Cottin held an academic lecture at the Venetian Athenaeum, titled "Notions on Japanese Language", which was later published in the journal *Ateneo Veneto* of the same year (Cottin 1886). It was comprised of 19 pages and three tables: the first displayed the phonetic alphabet *katakana*, the second one a *hiragana* chart, the third one simple dialogues with transliteration and literal translation: "Today nice the weather is. Your sister where she is? I her brother saw. Your father and mother good people are". In addition to a praise of his superiors and of Professor Naganuma, Cottin also mentioned a few students who attended those lessons and who particularly stood out: Giulio Gattinoni, who will teach Japanese at the Philology Club in Venice before moving to the Oriental Institute in Naples, where he worked from 1907 to 1910, who published a few language texts: *Oral Japanese Grammar* (Venice, 1890) and *Complete Course of Japanese Language I, Writing* (Venice, 1908); Emilio Roquemartine, who could not - holding a French passport - work for the Italian delegation in Tōkyō, but nonetheless served as interpreter

23 "The Japanese Honorary Consul in Italy, Cav. Guillaume Berchet, an Italian who was honoured with the Fourth Class of the Order of Imperial Merit, sent the following letter to the *Jiji shinpo* to praise our fellow countryman Mr. Moriyoshi Naganuma: 'One of the most admired pieces of the National Exhibition of Fine Arts, opened in Venice last year, is a gypsum statue sculpted by Mr. Mariyoshi Naganuma, born in Iwate prefecture in Japan, Professor of Japanese language at the High School of Commerce in Venice, and student at the Royal Institute of Fine Arts in the same city. The sculpture, titled *Au Lido*, portrays a beautiful young boy who holds a sea shell picked up from the beach. The elegant statue was largely admired by the public. Had it been sculpted in marble, it could have had surely sold for a high price. It was also requested for the Emilian Exhibition now open in Bologna. It is a shame that it wasn't shown; it would have surely earned much praise. However, the sculpture had already been damaged in various spots during transport, so it was decided not to send it to the Exhibition. A rich connoisseur wanted to buy the statue in order to reproduce it in bronze. The sculptor, Mr. Naganuma, is no longer in Venice and cannot control the process. Now he lives in Japan. I hope that his fame reaches his country, and the he - inspired by this good result - will continue his activity to honour both his country and Italy, where Mr. Naganuma studied, the country where his sculpture technique was forged. Japanese Consul in Venice, Italy, Guillaume Berchet'". *Iwate nichinichi shinbun*, 26 August, 1888 (cited in Ishii 1998).

for the French delegation.²⁴ Others were Timo Pastorelli, from Melara (Rovigo), who taught Italian at the Tōkyō School of Foreign Languages (Tōkyō Gaigo),²⁵ and A. Scolastici, who too lectured in the same school for two years, as well as Luigi C. Casati, “who is now responsible for the government of Korea”, as reported by Cottin. The latter stresses that the method of approaching the language used by Naganuma recalls Franz Ahn’s progressive method, so that a fast learning of the basic spoken language is made easier,²⁶ while the approach to the written language is more difficult, for “the Chinese symbols are the main obstacle”.

He also notes: “I cannot say why, even though they already had their own alphabet, they still chose to use these Chinese symbols; it could be to favour commercial exchanges with that nation”, but he believes that “the study of those Chinese symbols should be considered as a study subject for a dedicated course”. Then, after explaining the basic rules, he concludes that “in the written language the greater challenges are due to the use of Chinese characters; in the spoken language, students are particularly troubled by pronunciation and sentence structure”. Unfortunately, this peculiar statement on pronunciation was not better explained. On the other hand, Cottin exposes some acute practical observations: “Instead of an animal feather or a mineral of some sort, they use a little brush called *fudè*; the ink they use is the one we call ‘of China’, which dries instantly, a characteristic which is very useful considering that, when writing right to left, it would be easy to get the paper stained”.

In 1897 the second International Art Exhibition was held. Even though Venice had already asked for the participation of Japan to the first Exhibition, it was then too late to organise it properly. In the occasion of the

24 *La Gazzetta* reports on 9 September 1874: “From Tokio, 15 July: In the Nishin-Shimbun and other Japanese newspapers, I happily read many pieces regarding the school of Japanese Language in Venice. These newspapers show their satisfaction with the project, but I believe that it would be better if the Government, in return, added the teaching of Italian Language to the *Kasei Gakko*, which is the first language school in Tokio, as it is unreasonable that many European languages are taught there, with the exception of ours, which is used by many who come here or by those who maintain commercial relations concerning the silk market. It is speculated that the best student of the Venetian School, Mr. Emilio Roquemartine, is supposed to come here. He will be very much welcome, and he will be the first example of the level of your school as well as its first great outcome”.

25 Pastorelli already served as representative for the Royal Museum of Commerce of Venice in the capital, establishing there a special agency. He remained in Japan for a long time, and in 1911 it is recorded that he sent to the Royal Museum an important report on the Yokohama harbour and its commerce, with special attention to Italy, report which was later published in the *Rivista commerciale d'Oriente*.

26 A method already adopted by Kawamura, and then maintained by all the other Japanese professors. Franz Ahn (1796-1865) is best known for his simple and practical approach to the teaching of languages, which for him consisted in the study of grammar structures through short and frequently used sentences.

second Exhibition, it was once again Berchet who managed the contacts, while for other events everything was managed by ambassadors and ministers. As a result, once the approval of Secretary Fradeletto was obtained, Berchet sent, on 15 January 1896, a letter of invitation that ended with these words: "La prochaine Exposition aura lieu du 1er avril jusqu'à 30 octobre 1897; et nous espérons d'y pouvoir admirer aussi des œuvres d'artistes japonais de l'ancienne et mieux encore de la nouvelle école". Berchet included a piece of Pompeo Molmenti's speech that was reported on *La Gazzetta* of 13 January:

Neither it is my intention to forget the efforts to bring Japanese Art to the next Exhibition. Whoever even barely knows, ladies and gentlemen, the ruddy and bizarre fantasies of that Art, its decorative flair, the rich inspiration which can add to a candid primitive spirit the finest expedients of a refinedly mature civilization, will soon convince themselves of the fascination that this Art can hold not only for those chosen minds who research all the original forms of beauty, but also for those many persons of good taste who cheer and take care of every notable novelty.

We think that we should not be waiting anymore to start working on the next Exhibition, both because we are the recipients of the most welcome and undoubted promises, and the echo of the previous success is still vibrant in the artists' souls, and finally because, if we hesitate any longer, another city could take this great event from us.

It was the Japanese Art Society (Nihon Bijutsu Kyōkai)²⁷ who took care of the organisation. They sent only their members' works and gave Naganuma the responsibility of finding an answer in Europe to the most urgent question arisen in those years: was Japanese art to be considered pure art or regarded instead as decorative art? This debate saw the participation of Corrado Ricci, Ugo Ojetti, Antonio Munaro, Vittorio Pica and Enrico Thovez, among others. Others, with more competence than this Author, published essays on this subject, including topics as: the debate's conclusion, the various opinions and the frantic exchange of letters; the stances of the Venetian authorities (Molmenti, the Major Grimani, Dal Zotto, Fradaletto, Selvatico) and of the Japanese authorities (minister Sanno, the omnipresent Naganuma, the Japanese Art Society); the refusal of the

27 It was thanks to officials and art dealers interested in the participation of Japan to the world expositions, amongst whom there was minister Sano Tsunetami, that the Ryōchikai 'Society of the Dragon's Pond' was founded in 1879. In 1887 its name was changed to Nihon Bijutsu Kyōkai 'Japanese Art Society'. The purpose of the Association was to give value to the Japanese art in Europe, where the fever for *japonisme* was spreading, and to enhance the export of Japanese art pieces. The term *bijutsu* 'beauty and technique' was born in 1873 as a translation from the German *Schöne Künste*.

Japanese part to send the original ancient pieces instead of the copies they sent; the need to take some pieces from two already existing collections in Europe, owned respectively by Ernst Seeger (Berlin) and Alessandro Fé d'Ostiani, and the invitation to Edmond De Goncourt to supervise the Japanese section, which was nullified by his death.

In this first participation, Japan presented 35 paintings and 69 'art objects' (sculptures, lacquers, porcelains): numerous were the difficulties (custom clearance, water infiltration into the trunks, insufficient space in the Giardini location at the beginning, and so on), but in the end, accepting some logistical adjustments, the organisation of the exhibit was successful, to both everybody's satisfaction and the surprise of those who did not know anything about Japanese art.²⁸ According to Naganuma, one of the reasons why the public showed so much interest in the Japanese exhibition resided also in the admiration for the Japanese military victory in 1894-95 against the Chinese colossus. It is not possible here to report all the accounts, documents and facts regarding this first Japanese outing, artistically speaking, in Venice. However, a peculiar event happened with regard to the selling of these works: we refer to the fact that seventeen Venetian hoteliers bought seven paintings, which they thereafter offered to the City Hall as a contribution to the "soon to be established Gallery of Modern Art", the present-day Museum of Modern Art in Ca' Pesaro. These paintings are unfortunately not exhibited now. The comment of *La Gazzetta* was: "A beautiful gesture from the hoteliers, which, we are sure, will urge the other owners of the numerous Hôtels, who still didn't, to do the same..."²⁹

However, the reaction in Japan was somewhat lukewarm: the comments supporting some of the doubts expressed by a few Italian critics about the real value of Japanese art were very few and isolated, but it cannot be forgotten that these were the years when Ernst F. Fenollosa and Okakura Tenshin staunchly upheld the superiority of Japanese art on the western one.³⁰ Japan did not participate in the third Biennale in 1899, as it was preparing for the World Exposition in Paris (1900), nor in the following

28 For the list of the works exhibited and comments on Japanese art, see Munaro 1897, 209-17.

29 The 'meritorious' hotels were: Britannia, Europa, Italia, Luna, Roma, Milan, Inghilterra, Beau-Rivage, Métropole, Aurora, Sandwirth, San Marco, Cavalletto, Belle Vue, Vapore, Cappello Nero, Bella Venezia.

30 Ernest F. Fenollosa (1853-1908), an American educator and art scholar, taught in Japan from 1878 to 1886. Patron of the tradition Japanese art, he contributed to the protection of many masterpieces and to the re-evaluation of the local art. His student Okakura Kakuzō Tenshin (1862-1913) fought for the recognition of the Japanese traditional arts. In 1889 he was amongst the founders of the first Academy of Arts, Tōkyō Bijutsu Gakkō (nowadays Tōkyō University of Fine Arts and Music). He introduced Japanese culture in Europe through various conferences, debates and books, like *The Ideals of the East* (Okakura 1903), and *The Book of Tea* (1906).

ones,³¹ but the impact that Japan's participation had on the resolves that were taken, both in Europe and Japan, on the participation of 'decorative arts' in these events was fundamental.

In January [1900] Mr. Takeo Terasaki, student at the Institute of Fine Arts in Venice, inaugurated at the School a course on Japanese language, which is attended by 30 students divided into three groups of ten students each, in order to ensure a more efficient way of teaching. The young professor was presented to the students with an important speech by the director, Professor Castelnuovo, who reminisced of the past, when this course was issued at Ca' Foscari, and hoped for the just renewed teaching assignment to be as successful as possible. (*Bollettino* 35, 1909, 15)

An excerpt of Professor Castelnuovo's well received speech:

Indeed, because these oriental languages are the object of not mandatory courses, their knowledge being not necessary to a man of average culture like it is the study of French and English, their study is left to the interest of those who have a strong will of learning them, or who are particularly versed in the philological disciplines. It is enough for the teacher of Turkish language, as it is for the one of Japanese, that each year two or three students graduate from the School with the ability to put their teachings to good use. Sirs, in this movement which urges Italy to re enter the route to the East, Venice must be nowhere else than in front line. (*Bollettino* 36, 1909, 33-4)

These courses lasted until 1923, to the satisfaction of the local authorities and of the students. Terasaki,³² who also taught the language to Ferdinando

31 A sporadic appearance was in 1924, on the occasion of the Fourteenth Biennale. The regular participation of Japan in Venice with a proper Pavilion begun in 1952.

32 The name Terasaki Takeo appears in the *Annuario della R. Scuola Superiore di Commercio in Venezia per l'anno scolastico 1913-14* (116). The list of his publications includes both studies on the commercial relations between Italy and Japan, regarding the development of the silk worm related industry in Italy and the transportation of hard coal from Manchuria published on the *Official Bulletin of the Commerce and Industry Ministry of Japan* (years 1909-11), and articles published on Japanese periodicals, like the *Bulletin of the Tōkyō Academy*, regarding various artistic themes. There is a photo that depicts a group of about fifty people, between teachers and students, reunited around the well in the Ca' Foscari courtyard, dated July 1912. The *Bollettino della Associazione degli antichi studenti* follows Terasaki's career across the years, taking note of the trips to Japan in 1916-17 in order to care for his ill mother, or his impossibility to return in 1918 caused by the "intensified war of the German submarines", as well as the anxiety due to the lack of news about his situation after the terrific earthquake of 1923.

of House Savoia, Prince of Udine,³³ stayed in Venice for a long time, studied painting at the Academy, became friends with a few local painters (for example, Gino Cadorin), and wrote a grammar text (Rivetta, Terasaki 1911) in collaboration with Pietro Silvio Rivetta, professor in Naples from 1907. The always present Berchet wrote the preface. Terasaki was a productive painter, and a great number of his paintings and sketches depict Venice. One of these, simply titled *Venice* (Takeo, Tateyama 2003, 17, fig. 77), was one of Taishō Emperor's favourites, who kept it in his room. It is now located in the National Museum (Tōkyō Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan), as a gift from the Imperial Family. Terasaki was the first Japanese artist to be honoured at the Biennale, and he received this praise for his painting *Kannon* (Takeo, Tateyama 2003, 26, fig. 1), bought by the Italian government and now kept at the Museum of Modern Art in Ca' Pesaro. In 1930 he organised the Exhibition of Japanese Art, supported by the baron Okura Kinshichirō, which was held in Rome at the Exhibition Palace, and had a wide appeal. For this continuous activity in the field of arts, he was nominated Knight of San Maurizio and of Italy (second class), as reported in the illustrated catalogue of the retrospective exhibition *The World of Terasaki Takeo* in April 1967 (2003). At the inauguration, the writer Mishima Yukio praised his "blue skies of Italy", pointing out how his inclination towards sensations of calmness, serenity, cheerfulness, and a lack of ambiguity was understood more in Japan than in Italy.³⁴ With Terasaki, we arrived at the end of these intense years, rich of innovation, encounters, initiatives of which we just gave a glimpse; with the forced suspension of the courses, our overview of the Japanese teachers active between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries ends.

Yoshida, Ogata, Kawamura, Naganuma, Itō and Terasaki were not the only Japanese in the Venetian lagoon during those years. All began with the first real Japanese tourist in Venice (and in Italy), the man of letters and journalist Narushima Ryōhoku, who wrote his memories in *Kōsei nichijō* (Diary of a Journey to the West). From the diary we know that he arrived in Venice at 5 p.m. on 21 March 1873 and checked into the Hotel La Luna (reported from Keene 2001).

In his memories, he observes that Venice, though less prosperous than Milan, is much more beautiful. He describes its canals and bridges, and tells us of his walking under the colonnades in Saint Mark square, which he compares to the Palais Royal in Paris, and of which he admires the white

33 The *Bollettino* for the 1911-12 years reports: "Terasaki had the honour this year to give private Japanese language lessons to H.R.H. the Prince of Udine, who expressed his satisfaction" (114). Ferdinand of House Savoy, on board of the Calabria, later went to Japan in order to do some research at the Imperial University of Tōkyō.

34 It must be noted that we know how much the young Mishima was attracted by the serenity and the clear colours of the Mediterranean skies and seas, as it is evident in one of his first best sellers, *The Sound of Waves* (Mishima 1954).

marbles. He sits in a café with stone tables and seats. During the night, he is tormented by mosquitos: since arriving in Europe, this is the first time he hears those insects' noise, and he notes that it must be caused by the great number of canals.

The day after, he visits the Palazzo Ducale, and he admires its architecture and the portraits of the *Doges* and, when he asks his guide the reason why some of the faces are empty, the guide jokingly tells him that they had been 'borrowed' by Napoleon. He also visits the Piombi, the Serenissima's prison, and is deeply moved by the torture devices that are stored there. On a day of celebrations, in Saint Mark's square, he admires the 544 marble columns of the Basilica: young girls are selling flowers, there is music everywhere, and under the shadow of the bell tower people are promenading wearing their best dresses. Among the churches that he had the chance to visit - Frari, Jesuits, Carmini - the last was the one that impressed him the most for its beauty, and he is also particularly intrigued by the hole in the ceiling caused by an Austrian cannon shot. He also went to visit Murano, as it was usual and unmissable, while more unusual was the visit to the San Michele cemetery. His brief stay comes to an end on the dawn of 24 March: he takes a gondola to the station to catch a train to Bologna, highly praising the gondolier, who in his honour lifts the Japanese flag.

We will not go beyond this example as concerns Japanese tourists, but it must be said that many of them stopped in Venice during their trips to Italy either for business (the commerce of silkworm eggs) or for pleasure during the time taken into account: Tajima Keitarō who there met Nagamura in 1892; Atani Kahei, who is visited the city in 1899 under Berchet's guidance; Anesaki Masaharu and Ueda Bin in 1908, as well as many others. Between the numerous statements of admiration and amazement for the beauties of the city, there were also a few of disagreement, like Sakurai Ason, who in 1908 complained because he was requested to pay for the transportation of his heavy luggage, or Tanabe Eijirō, who the following year noted that the storekeepers were too demanding, but all things considered similar to the Japanese ones located in tourist locations; Ninagawa Arata, who visited Venice in 1913-14, reported that the porting service was too expensive, the canals stinked, the mosquitos were too many, the gondolas too dirty, the alleys too narrow, and in general noted that the city was full of pigeons' guano (see Beretta 1997, 2001, 2004, 2006 for a collection of four articles that is a precious tool for both details on these travellers' activity in Italy and selected commentaries from their diaries).

But the most significant reported visit may date back to 1585, when four young men who had freshly embraced the Catholic faith were invited in Europe by the Jesuit Father Alessandro Valignano, in order to pay homage to the Pope. They visited various locations across Portugal, Spain and Italy, and in their journey's memories, edited and completed by Valignano, and

then translated in Latin,³⁵ this is the way they describe their entrance into the city on a boat from Chioggia:

we happily entered the city of Venice, which is so famous in Europe thanks to the so called Grand Canal [...] which, like a sinuous serpent, flows through the city with various curves and in its course outlines the European letter 'S' on the map; we crossed it while it was crowded with an impressive number of citizens, and after observing this multitude of people, the magnificence of the works of art, the majesty of the entire city, we easily understood why this city was most famous in Europe.

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³⁵ *De Missione Legatorvm Iaponensium ad Romanam curiam, rebusq; in Europa, ac toto itinere animaduersis Dialogvs Ex Ephemeride Ipsorvm Legatorvm Collectvs, & In Sermonem Latinvm Versvs ab Eduardo de Sande Sacerdote Societatis Iesv. In Macaensi portu Sinici regni in domo Societatis Iesv cvm facultate Ordinarij, & Superiorum*. Year 1590. According to Vilignano's intentions, the text was supposed to be used in seminars and, after being translated in Japanese, to be used to get the locals to know the magnificence of the European courts and of the Holy See. His ideas were nullified by the changes in the political situation and by the aversion that the authorities had towards the missionaries.

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