Japan Seeks an Image as an Emerging Colonial Empire: The Japan-British Exhibition of 1910 in London

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A hundred years ago, in order to celebrate the on-going Anglo-Japanese alliance, the Meiji Government participated, with much expectation, in a timely joint exhibition held solely with her ally, Britain, at the 140-acre purpose-built exhibition site called the Great White City in west London. The Japan-British Exhibition ran from May to October 1910. It was "with much expectation," because the Japanese Government was able to directly project to the general public of her ally an image of Japan as a modern, civilized, emerging colonial power. The opportunity of such an occasion had hitherto been lacking. It was "timely," because the leaders had known for sometime that important negotiations with Britain were due to begin in July 1910, as well as for other reasons. The proposal to hold such an exhibition had been initiated by Imre Kiralfy (1845–1919), a private entrepreneur, who finally succeeded in persuading Komura Jutarō 小村寿太郎 (1855–1911), then Japanese Ambassador in London, to his idea in 1908. It was held in an era of international exhibitions, traditions of which Japan followed in many ways.

Before proceeding, I would like to stress here two points relating to the title of this panel, as it might be misleading with regard to what I am going to talk about in my paper. Firstly, the word "confrontation" might suggest a much stronger opposition than was actually expressed. It would, therefore, be more appropriate to describe the situation in terms of "grievances" or "complaints." Thus, there was no public confrontation as such during the Exhibition, except that there was an indictment at the Diet in Japan later. Another point is that the phrase "Eastern and Western institutions" might suggest "the Japanese and British Governments." It was, indeed so, in the case of the Japanese side, for this Exhibition was carried out "under the auspices of the Imperial Japanese Government." However, there was no direct involvement of the British Government with any exhibition held in Britain, including this one. Therefore, the closest official institution to be deeply involved with this Exhibition on the British side was the British Empire League, which included many prominent influential members, which was the supporter of Kiralfy's various enterprises, particularly in promoting a strong "empire" theme. It is no exaggeration to say that the extent of the League's involvement with this event was so profound that without its support, this Exhibition would never have materialized. Therefore, "the British authorities" in this paper refers not to the British Government, but to the British Commission, including Kiralfy and his Exhibition Ltd., many members of the British Empire

League and some others connected with Japan, such as Ernest Satow and former *oyatoi gaikokujin* (mostly, technical engineers employed by the Meiji Government some decades earlier), such as Henry Dyer, Edward Divers, John Milne, to name but a few. It is important to keep these points in mind.

In this short paper, I am proposing first to give a brief diplomatic background as an introduction, then, to outline the aims of the Exhibition so as to understand what the Japanese Government's expectations had been before its opening, including why certain exhibits had been selected. I will then focus on the main point of my paper: on the reactions to the Exhibition from the Japanese and the British, as well as the Japanese themselves, mainly on the dichotomies that developed from the middle of the opening season towards the end and try to discuss their causes. Then, I will illustrate the consequences of these grievances, finally concluding what we can learn from these for the future. Japanese names are shown in order of surname first followed by the first name.

I. Introduction

1. A Brief Background

After the Russo-Japanese war, Japan came to be regarded as a major power to be reckoned with by the other established imperial powers. One of the consequences of this, and a sign of this worldwide recognition, was that Japanese legations abroad were upgraded to embassies. Japan first came to the notice of the powers when she strove to revise the so-called unequal treaties which had been signed in 1858 by the Tokugawa Regime, and, after several unsuccessful attempts, she finally succeeded in revising part of them by using an effective strategy proposed by Munemitsu Mutsu in 1894, then Foreign Minister, of first negotiating with Britain, the most intransigent of the powers, in London rather than in Japan, and then negotiating subsequently with other powers.

Around the turn of the 20th century, Britain no longer felt able to indulge herself so far as to defend alone her over-stretched overseas territories such as those in the Far Eastern waters and needed a reliable ally. It is believed that it was due partly to the victory over China in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894/1895, when Japan acquired her first colony, Taiwan, and the efficient conduct of Japan during the Boxer Rising in 1900 in northern China, followed by the competent negotiation skills demonstrated by Komura Jutarō in Peking at the end of the incident, that the confidence of British authorities in Japan was so greatly enhanced as to encourage Britain to enter into an alliance with Japan, which was duly signed in January 1902.

In this period, Britain and Japan were entering different historical phases. British weakness having been exposed by the Boer war and by Germany catching up with Britain at an alarming speed in various ways, Britain began to need to maintain the status quo with regard to her long established colonial empire so as to tenaciously retain what she had acquired in the past centuries. Japan by contrast, as an aspiring colonial power, was experiencing an expansion of her empire. With the benefit of hindsight, we could expect that these phases going in opposite directions would partly, sooner or later, be the causes of conflicts a few decades later between Britain and Japan. Although this may be the subject of other research, this fact is important

for this study, since, the history of Japan becoming a colonial power by 1910 is relevant. There was no doubt that a number of treaties and agreements Japan concluded between1902 and 1910 with Britain, Russia, the U.S., and France were aimed at supporting each other's interests as colonial powers. This, of course, led to Japan's imposition of protectorate status on Korea in 1905, followed by the annexation of Korea in 1910. However, as far as Manchuria was concerned, the powers, particularly the U.S. and Britain, were not happy with what Japan was doing there—monopolizing the area of the South Manchurian Railway by sending the Japanese army to protect the Japanese along the railway lines, following, therefore, a closed-door policy, contrary to the open-door policy which Japan had pledged to other powers to maintain before entering the war with Russia.

There is no doubt that the grievances expressed by British mercantile sectors in East Asia against the Japanese monopoly in Manchuria was one of the bones of contention, which led to anti-alliance, thus, anti-Japanese, feeling in Britain, which became prevalent from around 1907 onwards. Almost all the Japanese leaders had been well aware of such sentiments in Britain and, in turn, lamented that the people in the West had a misconception of Japan as a warlike nation, or had an image of Japan as a backward, uncivilized country and so on. As for the general image of Japan conceived in the West immediately after the Russo-Japanese war, I agree with Jean-Perre Lehmann's view that "a mixed reception of Japan"s victory over Russia was the terrible fear of the unknown."[1] Indeed, this was akin to what the German Emperor had been publicizing, his notorious "Yellow Peril" warnings. Therefore, it is encouraging that many Japanese leaders were willing to have the opportunity to let the people in the West know the true situation of Japan; though what they said might have been mere rhetoric, at least the Exhibition provided such an opportunity.

2. The Era of International Exhibitions

It is necessary here to briefly explain what international exhibitions were like in the 19th and early 20th centuries, at the height of the age of imperialism, when only the great powers were able to host extravagant ventures such as these. After the 1851 Great Exhibition in London, holding such an exhibition was a "rite of passage" or a "coming of age" and a "must do event" for an aspiring power, an opportunity to show off to other nations what the host country had achieved, thus every such exhibition became bigger in scale and more elaborate than previous ones. This created an air of competition amongst the powers. The Meiji Government had recognized the enormous benefit of participating in international exhibitions. Before the 1910 Exhibition she had taken part in 36 such exhibitions in which Japan was merely one of thirty-odd participants, with small spaces allocated, mostly exhibiting minor artifacts and crafts, though after the Sino-Japanese war and the Russo-Japanese war, Japan had been given more space at these international exhibitions. Japan had also held many small domestic exhibitions in many cities in Japan.

Accordingly, having recognized herself as becoming a world power, Japan too had to go through the "rite of passage," following suit to the established colonial empire almost immediately after the Russo-

1 Lehmann, Jean-Pierre, *Image of Japan* (London 1978), pp. 10–11.

Fig. 1 The Exhibition site

Japanese war. There was a plan to host a big exhibition of an international nature, called, *Dai-Hakurankai*, the Japanese Grand Exhibition, which was going to be held in 1912 in Tokyo, securing the site of Aoyama Renpei-jō (the area for army ground practice) and the Emperor's land at Yoyogi, a total of 250 acres, with a budget of 20 million yen, appointing Kaneko Kentarō as the Committee's chairman. However, despite the fact that some major nations had already replied positively to the Japanese invitation, in September 1908, the government decided to postpone the Grand Exhibition until 1917, due mainly to the financial burden of the last war and the opposition of many *genro*s (elder statesmen). Finally, in 1912 it was officially cancelled. However, after the death of the Emperor on 30 July 1912, the use of the site was reviewed: with the support

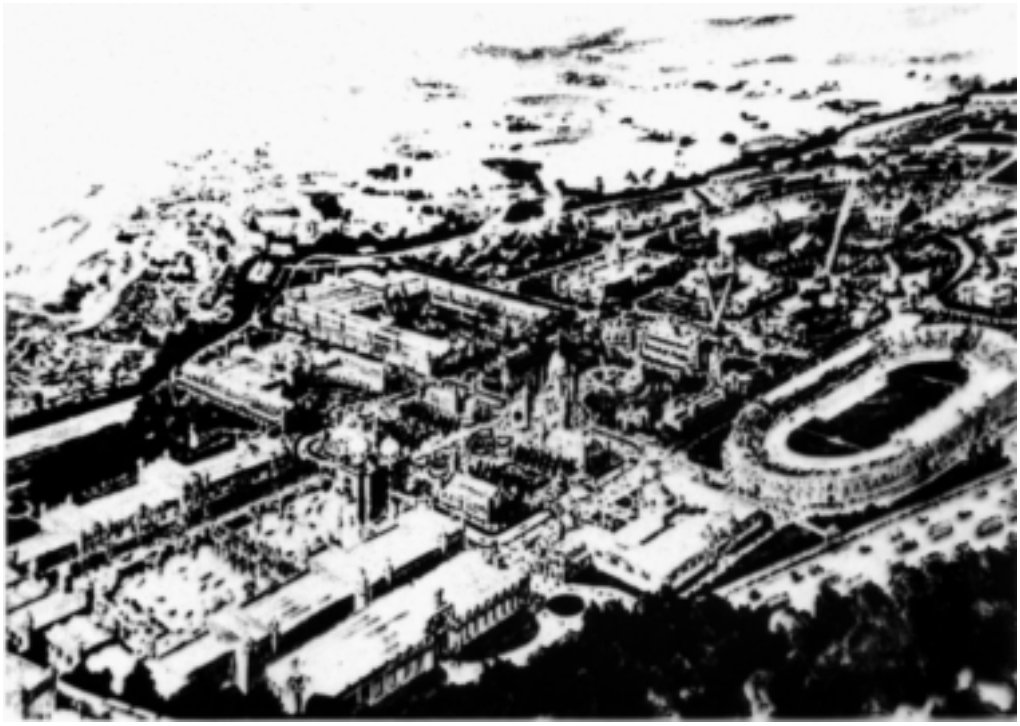

Fig. 2 A bird's eye view of the site

of the *genrō*, such as Yamagata and Matsukata, and others, the idea of the construction of the Meiji Jingū took root and construction started in 1916, and was completed in 1920. There is evidence that Japan's aspiration to host such a grand international event seems to have always existed. For example, the occasion to celebrate the 2,600 year anniversary of the foundation of Japan in 1940 had sprung up, but to no avail, due to the circumstances at the time. Japan, in the end, had to wait until 1970 to host an international exhibition for the first time at EXPO'70 in Osaka.

3. The Alternative International Exhibition Offered

It was around the time of the postponement of the Grand Exhibition that the idea of having an exhibition with Britain in London in 1910 was put forward to the second Katsura cabinet, after Komura had come back to Japan from London in September 1908 to resume the foreign minister's post for the second time. It could well have been this alternative and more attractive proposal to the Grand Exhibition that triggered its postponement to 1917.

Having consulted Ōura Kanetake 大浦兼武(1850–1919), the minister for Agriculture and Commerce, whose department would set up the enterprise, Komura succeeded in convincing the Cabinet and the Diet, and later secured an enormous budget over two years unanimously voted at the Diet in January 1909, despite Japan's financial constraints after the last war. The preparation was in full swing from then on, setting up a committee, sending two officials to London to do preliminary feasibility studies, and appointing Mutsu

Hirokichi 陸奥広吉(1869–1942), the First Secretary at the Embassy, to work full-time to be the main commissioner in London. The official contract was signed by Ambassador Katō Takaaki, Komura's successor, and Kiralfy and his Exhibition Ltd. at the end of March 1909. The Japanese space was to be 5 acres and together with the two Japanese gardens this totalled 11 acres: this was three times the size of the Paris exhibition in 1900 and twice that of the St. Louis exposition in 1904. The Japanese and British Commissions were headed respectively by Honorary Presidents, Prince Fushimi and Prince Arthur, Duke of Connaught, who had been sent by King Edward VII to the Meiji Emperor for the Garter Mission in 1908.

II. Japanese Aims for the Exhibition

It is important here to briefly list the aims of the Exhibition, as this was not merely a trade exhibition as had been most of Japan's previous exhibitions, but one of far wider scope. The space allocated to the Japanese section, as well as the budget, were by far the largest of any exhibitions in which Japan had so far participated.

1. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance

As has been mentioned, the alliance which had been first signed in 1902 and renewed in 1905 around the time of the end of the Russo-Japanese war, was to expire in 1915. Although it was unexpectedly renewed in 1911 for the third time lasting until its termination in 1923, this only occurred because of previously unforeseen change of circumstance, which was triggered in part by the United States' proposal of the Arbitration Treaty to Britain. The Exhibition took no part in this, as some people might naturally expect. Because of the anti-Japanese feeling prevalent in Britain, mainly caused by the Japanese army's occupation in Manchuria, which led to the Japanese monopoly in trade there and Japan's flat rejections of railway constructions parallel to the South Manchurian railway by others, the Japanese Government was aiming to foster friendship with Britain through the Exhibition.

2. The Revision of the Unequal Treaties

In order to retrieve tariff autonomy, Komura sent a message to Britain in early 1909 declaring the annulment of the current tariff at its expiry in 1911 and his intention to start negotiations in July 1910, which had been laid down in 1894 as a condition of the treaty. Komura had hoped that tariff autonomy would help Japan's industrialization.

3. Economic, Finance, Trade, Industry and Foreign Loans

Since British exports to Japan had far exceeded those of Japan to Britain for many decades, another aim of the Exhibition was to reverse the trade imbalance. In addition, the Japanese Government (hereafter cited as JG) needed foreign loans to help its financial constraints after the Russo-Japanese war and for the South Manchurian Railway Company. So did some municipal offices. To achieve these loans, Japan needed

Fig. 3 The Japanese Red Cross Society

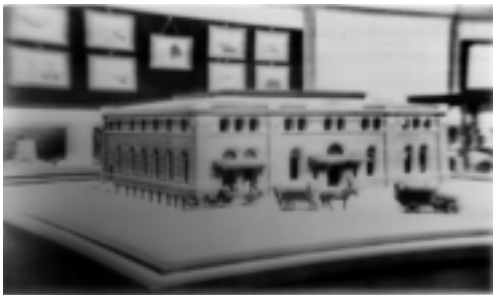

Fig. 4 The Japanese Postal system

Fig. 5 800 Bluejackets onboard cruiser *Ikoma*

to show her creditworthiness by exhibiting their best aspect so as to impress would-be City financiers to give loans to Japan.

4. Education and Advertisement of Japan to the British General Public

In order to project an image of Japan as a modern civilized nation worthy to be her ally, the JG displayed the exhibits from the Japanese Red Cross Society and the modern Post Office, as a member of civilized international society and this was reinforced when the cruiser *Ikoma* arrived Britain with 800 Bluejackets. (Fig. 3–5)

In order to project an image of a progressive nation having a long history behind her, just like Britain, as well as to correct the stereotypical conception of Japan as a new nation, which carried a measure of contempt, the JG displayed in the Historical Palace an elaborate exhibit of twelve life-size georama tableaux in

Fig. 6

Fig. 7

Fig. 8

Fig. 6–8 A scene of the Historical Palace, two scenes of different period

Fig. 9

Fig. 10

Fig. 11

Fig. 12

Fig. 9–12 Two Japanese gardens and two architectural models

chronological order from ancient times to the present, ending with a scene celebrating the signature of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. (Fig.6–8)

The JG also displayed in the Palace of Fine Arts about 600 fine arts items of national treasure quality and craft works, 13 elaborate traditional architectural models as well as women's exhibits and daily lives of ordinary people. Two authentic Japanese gardens, the Garden of Peace and the Garden of Floating Isles, were newly created with most of the materials being shipped over from Japan. Their aims were to project an image of Japan as having a cultivated refined high culture that was still continuing to the present day and to emphasize the peace-loving nature of the people and the nation. (Fig. 9–12)

To impress the British public that Japan was a member of the Imperial Club with her own colonies and an empire, just like Britain and other Western powers, exhibits from Taiwan, Korea, South Manchurian Railways and Kwantung Government were proudly displayed in the Palace of the Orient. (Fig. 13–15)

Fig. 13

Fig. 14

Fig. 15

Fig. 13–15 Exhibits in the Palace of the Orient

III. Other Significant Japanese Exhibits

For nearly eighteen months, the first thing that the JG and all those who had been involved with the enterprise organizing the preparation of the exhibition had in mind was that, since the exhibition was to be held in London, even though it was to be a joint one, the Japanese exhibits would certainly attract the British general public much more than the British ones. Accordingly, they had resolved that most of the JG ministries needed to display exhibits of the highest quality including the most advanced technological exhibits showing signs of modern civilization, and these comprised almost half of the Japanese section. Apart from the JG exhibits mentioned earlier, there were exhibits representing departments for Agriculture, Metallurgy, Sericulture, Forestry, Railways, Machineries, War Department (four characteristic battles in georama), and Communication, many with their own publications, and a Military Band with 36 members and others.

In addition, 19 Municipal Offices, each organizing with its own budget, displayed their characteristic features with elaborate information. They included Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya, Yokohama, Kobe, Shizuoka, Ishikawa and Aichi.

As touched upon earlier, increasing Japanese exports to Britain was one of the main aims, so, about 2000 private companies in various fields were represented, often accompanied by information on their products and manufactured goods. The JG authorities had been overwhelmed by the shear number of companies that had applied, but they had no choice but to select only half of them due to a limited space.

IV. British Exhibits

British displays included various exhibits in many sectors just like the Japanese ones, if somewhat less elaborate or high quality than their counterparts, due mainly to British participation in the Brussels' International Exhibition at the same time, which Japan abstained from to concentrate on this Exhibition. However, Britain had had the advantage of not needing to spend as much as the Japanese on transportation of their exhibits, and so was able to display machinery of the latest technology. (Fig.16–17) One of the most popular and novel British exhibits for the Japanese visitors seems to have been the fingerprint detection machine displayed by Scotland Yard.

V. Entertainments and Attractions

Although the JG was responsible for organizing Japanese exhibits, including private companies', as far as the entertainment side for the both countries was concerned, the contract signed back in March 1909 had set out that it was to be arranged by the Exhibition Ltd., to which the JG authorities had agreed. Mr. Julian Hicks had had a sub-contract with the company and, accordingly, for the Japanese entertainment, he had been sent to Japan and selected 156 entertainers, who were to be sent to London, including the Ainu and Taiwanese aborigines. (Fig. 18–19)

As for the British side, most entertainments and attractions had been at the site for two years since the

Fig. 16–17 Railways, textile machinery, a cannon

Fig. 18 Sumo wrestlers

Fig. 19 Ainu village

Franco-British Exhibition of 1908 and the Imperial International Exhibition of 1909, and they were there in the 1910 Exhibition, some of which were novelties for many visitors, including the Japanese. (Fig. 20)

VI. Various Dichotomies

There were many and varied dichotomies, the root causes of which were basically the differences between the East and West. Here, by the words, "the East and West," I do not entirely mean the people in the East and West, including their traditions and customs, but also, in this case, the westernized Japanese (the West).

It is important first to know who were complaining, about what and how. The most vocal grievances

Fig. 20 A flip-flap and a canal. Novelty attractions and side-shows.

of all were expressed by the westernized Japanese, residents or visitors from Japan who had come specifically to see the Exhibition. After some research, we now know who they were and how different they were from other Japanese and, indeed, from the Westerners. Unlike the Japanese who moved to the U.S. in search of work as labourers and who later became a cause for concern to the U. S. immigration authorities, and consequently, to heads of both countries, most Japanese who travelled to Britain and Europe, either to live or visit the Exhibition, generally belonged to an affluent sector of Japanese society. They included lawyers, diplomats, financiers, factory owners, industrialists, traders, politicians, students, scholars and educationalists. By the end of the Meiji period, more and more people in Japan, mostly learned men, had already acquired a fair knowledge of almost everything western, from philosophy to science, accounting to commerce, literature to religion and music and other cultural pursuits, to name but a few. In addition, their lifestyles had become westernized and, equipped with basic but adequate language skill before they came to Europe, they had already become quite familiar with Westerners' lifestyles. They were of an articulate elite class who could afford to travel to Europe, and some were staying for sometime, whatever their purposes were. Most of them looked down on traditional Japanese culture and customs regarding them as backward and feudal.

Indeed, many dichotomies were evident between the ordinary traditional Japanese (the East) and westernized Japanese (the West). For example, most Japanese visitors to the Exhibition complained about traditional entertainments or entertainers, which were the norm in Japan a hundred years ago, such as sumo, acrobatic acts, dancers and craftsmen working on ceramics, enamels, bamboos, woodcarving, ivory,

cloisonné, fans, paintings, ikebana and so on at the Japanese Village. The Ainu and Taiwanese aborigines at their separate villages did not escape from complaints. What were the Japanese visitors complaining about? They disparaged these Japanese participants as people of low-class which would certainly confirm the British public's preconception of Japan as a backward uncivilized nation. Their grievances were often reported in the Japanese press. Some politicians who witnessed the Exhibition went back to Japan to publicize such complaints and report them to their superiors in their political parties.

How different were the elite westernized Japanese visitors from their British counterparts? Although the former's lifestyles were similar to the latter's, perhaps, their mentality might not have been the same as those Briton's. This could be evidenced in some cases. For example, when they complained about the Ainu and Taiwanese aborigines, what they were concerned about was that exposing the natives to the British public was morally wrong and so vulgar that the visitors, particularly, women might feel disgust, while their British elite, particularly those members of the British Empire League, did not feel the same way as the Japanese did when they saw the natives of British empire shown at international exhibitions. The reason for such a differing view may be that, while those Japanese saw themselves and the aboriginal natives in some senses as brothers, it never occurred to those British that the natives from British colonies had anything in common with themselves: this striking difference could have been that, while the former were living in an emerging new empire yet to see the natives in the colonies differently to themselves, the latter living in a mother country with a long-established mature empire had no qualms about the natives of the colonies being shown at these occasions.

Another dichotomy between the Japanese visitors and British authorities in this respect was that the practice of showing the natives and their daily lives, which started in France, as well as providing some eye-catching and novel entertainments at international exhibitions had become one of the traditions of these events since the late 19th century. The British side of entertainments in this Exhibition, therefore, included the Irish village and a New Zealand Pavilion with the Maori people and many side-shows and fairground type machines, quite a novelty at the time, as well. The Japanese authorities had had to leave these entertainments altogether to the Exhibition Ltd. to organize as a condition of the contract. The company was merely following the well-established tradition of international exhibitions at the time.

Those Japanese visitors also fiercely complained of some conduct of the British organizers and the Japanese commissioners who had apparently been bullied by Kiralfy in various ways, as well as about the paucity of the British exhibits. The first two points are beyond the scope of this study, except their complaints about the former's arrangement of the Japanese entertainment. However, for the last point, several reasons, which are relevant to this paper, need to be briefly explained. The Japanese visitors were ignorant of many political problems facing the British Government at the time. In addition, and very importantly, another international exhibition, the Brussels International Exhibition was being held at the same time and, while Britain was highly represented with prominent exhibits, Japan abstained from it, wanting to entirely concentrate on this Exhibition. Furthermore, Edward Grey (1862–1933), Foreign Secretary (1905–1916), and the Board

of Trade in particular, shied away from this Exhibition, because, although, for the Japanese side, Foreign Minster Komura had initially promoted the holding of this Exhibition for the sake of the Anglo-Japanese alliance and of cultivating goodwill, in fact, it turned out to have been under the control of the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce, thus, they assumed that Japan's main aim had been to increase exports to Britain. It is also true to say that Britain had been hosting many international exhibitions of a similar magnitude, but Japan had never hosted one, except for small scale domestic ones. Japan had much more at stake in the Japan-British Exhibition than Britain had.

Now we find that most complaints were made by those elite-class Japanese visitors, but were there any grievances or feelings expressed by those Japanese participants in the entertainment sector? We could assume that, as compared with the westernized Japanese, they might not have been very articulate or learned. However, evidence shown in articles written by them in the British press might throw some light on their true feelings. The Ainu people left a message in the *Daily News* on 2 November 1910, just before their return to Japan, as an expression of gratitude to the British public and of a certain degree of loyalty to, and of consciousness of their doing a worthy job for, their own country. There was no complaint. *The Japan Chronicle* on 28 July 1910 quoted another article written in the *Standard* by a London resident, Makino Yoshio, which gives us an insight into quite different views from other aforementioned Japanese visitors. Makino was a painter and writer of four books and admired those artisans with *yamato-damashii* (the Japanese spirit), as he had known that the other Japanese visitors to the Exhibition looked down on them. In his article called "the Japanese artisan," he compared the westernized Japanese with those artisans, whose relatives had actually fought at Port Arthur or Mukden, unlike the former, saying that "Ah, *Bushidō* shall never die out, as long as these people are existing in Japan, and most fortunately they have far larger number than the frock-coated men." Makino then took the artisans around London, as he respected them for their loyalty to their own country as they had asked him to introduce their wood-work to England, not for themselves, but for the sake of the country.

There were other dichotomies between the East and West in terms of the question of aesthetics about the retrospective and modern fine arts, and some private companies' exhibits. There were some conflicts in the thinking of the Japanese organizers as to what to exhibit—this problem seems to have persisted right from the beginning of the Meiji Government's participations in overseas exhibitions, and perhaps, even right up to this day to some degree: whether they should stick to their own traditions or follow others, i.e. in Western style, particularly in this period. There had been an abundance of criticisms, advice or suggestions given to the Japanese by numerous Western art experts previously. For example, as early as 1873 at the time of the Vienna Exhibition, Cunliff P. Owen, the Japanophile and the head of Kensington Museum had sympathetically advised the Japanese commissioner for the exhibition that Japan should try to exhibit authentic goods of her own at these exhibitions rather than those of inferior Western imitation. In 1904 the president of the St. Louis Fair, David R. Francis, said similarly that Japan would do better to concentrate on displaying her own traditional arts rather than inferior copies of Western arts. Indeed, similar advice or criticism had been

expressed in press reviews in Europe and the U.S. over many previous decades. It seems that, in response to such criticisms, the number of Western-style paintings by Japanese artists in the international exhibitions of 1900 in Paris and of 1904 in St. Louis, were 142 and 105 respectively, dropping dramatically to only 38 at the 1910 Exhibition, marking an abrupt decline, while traditional paintings at the same exhibitions had been 389, 498 and 594 respectively, a dramatic increase.

In this Exhibition, where numerous rare and high quality Japanese treasurers were exhibited, a large number having been shipped over to London, being changed constantly to avoid the light, many art experts from Europe flocked daily to see them to study the genuine retrospective fine arts, while the room showing Japanese Western-style paintings was empty most of the time. One of the reasons that such a great number of high quality works of fine art was available was the enthusiastic commitment of the Chairman of the Japanese Commission, Ōura, which was such that he personally went round the former lords, historic famous temples and shrines to persuade them to lend their fine art treasures for the sake of the nation, and they had no hesitation to do so, as long as the safe return of the works of art after the Exhibition was assured. In addition, prominent people also willingly lent their precious treasures. Inoue Kaoru, for instance, lent the painting of *Jūichimen Kanzeon Bosatsu* and of Sesshū, and persuaded others to follow suit. This is the reason why there were so many items of high quality and rare retrospective fine arts that had never been seen even by most Japanese, and most of them are still national treasures kept in many prominent museums. British newspaper articles, often written by art experts such as Lawrence Binyon and Gaston Migeon, the head of the Louvre Museum, praised these fine arts and their spacious display.

Similar criticisms were also applied to many Japanese Western-style furniture displays at the Exhibition, ironically spotting a hint of commercialism in the displays, while traditional-style displays were praised. For example, some pieces of furniture were identified at the time as having been designed with European tastes in mind and, on 22 June 1910, the *Architects & Builders Journal* describes, "a screen, ..., undoubtedly sumptuous in effect, but there is a touch of Parisian taste about it that rather jars upon one." and, of an embroidered silk screen, ending "Is it possible that these things are made with a special eye to the English market?," while the same journal highlighted the instruments for the automatic recording of earth tremors designed by Ōmori for the Imperial Earthquake Investigation Committee which were praised for the beauty and delicacy of their Japanese design and manufacture.

The common reaction by the Western experts towards many Japanese Western-style exhibits may have been that, basically, they felt apprehension about what they, perhaps, regarded as a threat to the achievements of their own civilization. This trend may happen in any part of the world. Generally, therefore, at the beginning of this trend, the former might feel friendly towards the latter, if in a patronizing way, so long as the latter is sticking to own traditions and customs whilst being a student. However, when the latter tries to emulate the former, then the former may feel threatened and show contempt for the latter.

A very good example of this tendency is the case of Japan for a century from the middle of the 19th century onwards. After Japan opened to the world and started to modernize, i.e. westernize, the West was

quite generous in offering help, if in a somewhat patronizing way, but the West's attitude to Japan seems to have begun to change to that of contempt and caution after Japan had developed enough to be able to win two wars and had resolved to turn away from Asia and join the Western club (*Datsua nyūō*) adopting Western imperialism and thereby causing a threat to the West and hence, perhaps, prompting the reactionary tendency in mind. For example, the Triple Intervention in 1895 after Japan's victory over China is a case in point; a series of U.S. intrigues supposedly helping China, though ultimately for her own good, through the so-called Dollar diplomacy, challenging Japan's rights, after Japan's victory over Russia, is another; and followed by the "Yellow Peril" warning. It is plausible therefore to assume that these kind of reactions might have partly contributed to the growing anti-Japanese feeling in Britain at that time.

VII. The Occidental vs The Oriental

It may be appropriate here to examine the view that the Exhibition gave an opportunity for the British public to focus on current racial concepts, relating to the Occidental and the Oriental. A common view in the West a hundred years ago seems to have been that non-Occidental races were inferior, and not capable of asserting themselves. Accordingly, at international exhibitions, colonizers tried to emphasize the primitive aspect of the colonies by exhibiting the natives. At the Japan-British Exhibition, however, it seems that roles were reversed in this respect. Of course, although the relationship of Britain and Japan was not that of the colonizer and the colonized, the fact that Japan was undoubtedly non-Occidental seems to have aroused interest and discussion amongst some people. Japan set out to present herself in this Exhibition as being a worthy ally of Britain, as a commercial, naval, and imperial power. Accordingly, the *Official Guide* to the Exhibition produced by the British Commission stressed similarities rather than differences to demonstrate the racial acceptability of the Japanese:

> One curious similarity runs through the whole, that is, the striking similitude between the Japs and our own people. The resemblance manifests itself in manner, physical stamp, and shape of the head..... [2]

One of the effects of the Exhibition, therefore, was that the general public was aroused by an awareness of racial factors because of the sudden emergence of the Japanese: the difference between the Occidental and Oriental had become one of the issues of interest to the articulate British public and often the subject of public debate. That such issues were indeed hotly discussed among the public is illustrated clearly in *The Times*. After having read and been thoroughly enlightened by the Japanese Edition of 19 July 1910, Charles Bruce of Fife wrote a letter to the Editor of the newspaper on 26 July, relating Japanese achievements to Lord Morley's "splendid policy of Indian reform," suggesting that those who had any doubts over the reform because of their false belief that the Orientals did not possess by heredity an ability for self-government should

2 MacKenzie, John, *Propaganda and Empire*, pp. 105–6, (London, 1994).

give up such a brief. Charles Bruce's letter provoked a reply. An anonymous contributor refuted his view by saying that Bruce, while he "... imagines some people who, dividing mankind into two classes, the Orientals and Occidentals, declare the former to be all incapable and the latter all capable of self-government," believed that because the Japanese were Orientals, all other Orientals were automatically equally capable of self-government. He also commented to the Editor that, while he much admired the newspaper's achievement in issuing the recent supplements on Japan and South America, he did not think these two were needed to prove that some Orientals were fitted for self-government and some Occidentals were not.

These publicly-aired racial arguments were not confined only to political aspects, but were also extended to the arts during the Exhibition. In a topic entitled "The Division between East and West," *The Times*' editor responded on 1 July to Frank Swettenham's complaint of the indifference shown by the British public towards the "splendid collections" of Japanese art exhibited at the Exhibition, explaining the enormous difference between paintings of East and West and pointing out that such indifference was the result of mere ignorance of the British public about Japanese art. He stressed that, in the light of such ignorance on the part of the British public, the Exhibition in London gave the public the best opportunity ever to learn about Japanese paintings. He was convinced that, once they could understand the Japanese pictures at the Exhibition, they would also understand more about the Japanese themselves, and feel that underneath "all superficial difference" there was much more similarity between the East and West. He continued to say:

> Indeed, the likeness of the great Oriental pictures to the great European is far more striking than any difference between them. Both have the same kind of rhythm: both eliminate the same kind of irrelevances; both maintain the great orthodox tradition of art which survives through all transitory heresies. And so it is, from all that we hear, with the lasting ideals of righteousness in the East and West.

This Exhibition was not unique in evoking this topic, however. During previous international exhibitions, a similar topic had become the focus of argument. Comparing Japan's participation in the Chicago Exposition of 1893 and the St. Louis Exposition of 1904, questions of Japan's distinctiveness from other nations in Asia and Japan's sudden ascendance to power had arisen, and explanation was sought from the new and currently fashionable field of anthropology. The answer given by W. J. McGee, the head of the Department of Anthropology for the 1904 Exposition, was:

> It's the complexity of the blood. The more strains of blood a nation has in its veins, the greater and more powerful it becomes ... and in the instance of the Japanese, anthropologists find that they are the most complex nation of the Orient, just as the Anglo-Saxons, through the waves of successive populations that swept over the continent, were made the most complex nation of the Occident.

VIII. Reactions and Aftermath

A hundred years ago, long before the Internet age, the newspapers were the most effective and widespread way of letting the readers know of the affairs of the nation and the world, particularly in the period of growing public opinion, which could no longer be ignored. Since the grievances of those Japanese visitors to the Exhibition were so vocal, particularly upon their return to Japan, and their influences were so widely spread, the Japanese press, which was initially very enthusiastic about and, supportive of, the national enterprise during the preparation period and at the beginning of the Exhibition, seems to have shifted their views to a much more negative one.

On the other hand, the reactions of the British press with regard to the Exhibition were very favourable and there was some news about what was happening at the Exhibition site almost daily in many newspapers, journals and magazines.

Other effects of the popularity of the Exhibition were that some sensitive news such as the unpopular new tariff negotiations from July onwards, the annexation of Korea from 22 August onwards and the Treason Incident 大逆事件 from September onwards were often juxtaposed with more positive articles about the Exhibition, so that the British public were much more receptive to news about Japan than they might have otherwise been. It could be said that these current diplomatically and politically sensitive issues in combination with already existing anti-Japanese sentiment, might have been, to a certain extent, in conflict with the Japanese Government's noble aim of retrieving Britain's goodwill through the Exhibition.

The consequences of those grievances brought back by the influential Japanese visitors from London were several, one of which has been a long-lasting one. Being well aware of these bad reputations of the Exhibition, Ōura, invited the members of the press to his residence in September and explained that the Exhibition in London had achieved exactly what the authorities had expected, answering any queries raised.

Much more serious criticism was expressed in January 1911 at the Diet when an indictment was carried out against Komura, the Foreign Minister, who was accused by some Members of the Diet, who had seen the Exhibition in London, of deceiving the Diet, the Japanese general public and all others who had been involved with the Exhibition, for falsely convincing them of the worthy cause of such an Exhibition for the sake of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. As expected, Komura rejected these accusations and assured everybody that the Exhibition had achieved its purpose. However, these accusations against Komura and the government might well have been partly a political expediency on the part of these Members of the Diet, since they belonged to *Seiyū-kai* political party, as Hara Takashi 原敬 (1856–1921) recorded in his diary noting the reports that had been brought to him by these politicians. The second Katsura Cabinet was to resign not so long after the incident, though there was no way that this incident was responsible.

It seems that the fate of this Exhibition was sealed then: for the long suffering reputation of the Exhibition has since persisted as a mere failure, a blunder of Komura and a Japanese shame. It has been prolonged to such an extent that even Japanese experts on international exhibitions totally omitted this Exhibition from their surveys of international exhibitions, though they included the Franco-British Exhibition of 1908,

which was similar in nature and held at the same site as the Japan-British Exhibition. The subject had long been neglected until my research in diplomatic and political fields sometime ago, though some research has since been carried out in the fields of recently popular arts, museums and international exhibition studies.

IX. Conclusion

In conclusion, from the exhibition aims, the exhibits selected by the Japanese Government, the reactions of the elite Japanese visitors, some true feelings of the participants in entertainments, and some examples of dichotomies, we could see what the Japanese Government and those elite Japanese visitors wanted the British public to see and what they did not want them to see at the Japan-British Exhibition in 1910. The Japanese Government was trying to project an image to the British public of Japan as a modern, civilized, imperial power worthy to be Britain's ally, hence, government exhibits were accordingly selected to convincingly support such an image. According to members of the Japanese elite, the entertainment side did exactly the opposite. However, as argued earlier, those Japanese visitors were a minority in Japan, not representative of the Japanese general public. The British Ambassador to Japan (1900–1912), Sir Claude MacDonald (1852–1915), was reporting to Grey after the Exhibition in his annual report for 1910, "undoubtedly the exhibition has been a much greater success in British eyes than in those of the Japanese. The newspaper correspondents who were sent over from here [Japan] to bless certainly did the other thing with vigour," and saying most of their comments had been very unreasonable and "palpably biased." He continued that the Exhibition had been very popular in Britain, giving a great opportunity to the British public and provided them with the most updated information about Japan in almost all sectors, including retrospective fine arts and Japanese gardens, the most popular displays of all. Therefore, I believe that Japan's image making as an emerging colonial empire was a success, though there is no way of measuring precisely how much.

There is no doubt that the Meiji Government tried to promote Japan, made a great effort to do so and was successful in this. It is a historical fact. One should not turn away from such a fact just because a myth created by a minority of people. The Japan-British Exhibition should at least take its rightful place in the history of Anglo-Japanese relations.

During the past 100 years, such a conflict of thinking in terms of the East and West, argued in this paper, has become almost irrelevant as time has gone by, due mainly to enormous changes in our society worldwide. As we now live in a global society, in many ways transcending national boundaries, making things much more complex than a century ago, it is natural that people now think differently from the way they did a century ago. Most of the subjects of the dichotomies existing then have now disappeared in the forms expressed at the time, although, deeper divergences are perhaps continuing to evolve into contemporary forms, with contemporary resolutions.

Note: This paper is substantially drawn from my book, *The Japan-British Exhibition of 1910: Gateway to the Island Empire of the East* (Japan Library, 1999).