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Ancient Roman Antiquity in the Italian Landscape and the Reception of Roman History in Modern Japan (1868-1912)

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Abstract Diplomatic and cultural exchanges between Japan and the Kingdom of Italy began as soon as Japan opened its borders. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were particularly fruitful for fostering cultural ties, culminating in the growth of ancient Roman history and archaeology as academic disciplines in Japan. This article examines unpublished and little-known sources, including diaries of Japanese travellers and Meiji-era (1868-1912) writings on ancient Rome. It focuses on Japanese travellers' impressions of Roman monuments and ruins in Italy and explores how these experiences contributed to the dissemination of ancient Roman studies in Japan.

Keywords Ancient Roman Archaeology. Ancient Roman History. Meiji Period. Japanese travellers. Reception of Classical Antiquity.

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1 Introduction

The archaeological sites of the Kingdom of Italy were among the most prominent destinations for travellers during the era of the Grand Tour. In the eighteenth century, young men from upper-class British families travelled across the Continent to complete their education through practical experience, with Italy as their final destination. For those seeking to trace the history of ancient Rome and experience its glorious past, the remains of Antiquity served as vital clues for imagining the ancient Roman world. This was equally true for Japanese travellers. The opening of Japan's borders in 1854 made international travel possible, and from the beginning of the Meiji period (1868-1912), Japanese bureaucrats and aristocrats began visiting Europe and America as part of efforts to modernise and westernise their homeland.

Despite Japan's isolationist policy during the Edo period, interest in ancient Rome began to emerge in the nineteenth century. However, a deeper engagement with the subject developed with the dissemination of Western knowledge among Japanese intellectuals during the late Edo and early Meiji periods. These intellectuals began reading English works such as Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* and Hans Christian Andersen's *The Improvvisatore*, which fostered an interest in the remains of ancient Rome in Italy. Such well-known books reinforced the image of Ancient Rome as a decayed yet once-great civilisation for Japanese readers, which in turn fostered their desire to visit archaeological sites. Although the Ministry of Education introduced universal history into the school curriculum in 1872, visual knowledge of ancient Greece and Rome remained quite limited at the time. Unlike European tourists, Japan's long period of isolation left its travellers relatively unfamiliar with Classical Antiquity, leading them to approach Italy's ancient sites with fresh perspectives and expectations distinct from those of Europeans.

With the opening of Japan's borders and the possibility of international travel, how were Japanese intellectuals during the Meiji period impressed by Roman archaeological sites in Italy? What did they hope to learn through their visits? The study of how Ancient Rome was received in Japan is a relatively recent scholarly

endeavour.[1] To uncover the origins of Japanese interest in ancient Rome and the role of archaeological sites in Italy in shaping the image of the Roman city within Japanese society, this paper analyses the travel diaries of Japanese travellers alongside books and articles on ancient Rome from the late Edo and Meiji periods.

2 The Encounter with Roman History and Archaeology in the Late Edo Period

Japan's isolation policy, implemented from the late sixteenth century, significantly limited knowledge of European history within the country until the late eighteenth century. However, the arrival of foreign embassies – such as the Russian mission in 1792 and the United States delegation in 1853 – prompted Japanese scholars to recognise the importance of understanding world history in order to contextualise these encounters and their broader implications. In 1801, a Rangakusha (蘭学者, a person who studies Western science, primarily through Dutch sources) named Yamamura Saisuke 山村才助 published the first book about world history *Seiyō Zakki* 西洋雑記 (Notes on European History) (Sukeno 1978, 15). In the preface of this book, the author noted that it was primarily composed using 32 European books, 41 Chinese books, and 52 Japanese texts on Dutch studies available in Japan at the time. The book includes episodes from Roman history, such as the foundation myth of Romulus and Remus, Julius Caesar's military campaigns, and Constantine's relocation of the capital to Constantinople (Yamamura 1801, 48-51). The information in this book was passed down to later Japanese works on world history, though its content remained quite limited.

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The Authors would like to express their gratitude to the Murakawa family for allowing them to consult their archive, to Prof. Ralf Behrwald (University of Bayreuth) for his comments, and to Profs Paolo Calvetti and Silvia Vesco (Ca' Foscari University of Venice) for their interest in their research. They also wish to thank the anonymous reviewers for their valuable suggestions and constructive feedback, which helped to improve the clarity and quality of this article.
This study results from the close collaboration between the two authors. With regard to the concerns of Italian Academia, Yuko Fukuyama is responsible for Sections 2 through 5, while Myriam Pilutti Namer is responsible for Sections 1 and 6. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are by Yuko Fukuyama.

1 Cardi and Kondo's forthcoming 2026 publication will be the first comprehensive book dedicated to the reception of Classical Antiquity in Japan..

Despite this, one notable *Uki-e* 浮絵 (perspective print) depicting Roman antiquity exists. Attributed in the 1770s-1780s to Utagawa Toyoharu 歌川豊春, a prominent *Uki-e* artist of the time and founder of the Utagawa school, the print portrays a landscape featuring the Colosseum, the statue of Marcus Aurelius, the Arch of Titus, Trajan's Column, and various other ancient Roman objects **[fig. 1]**.[2] The title of the print, *Oranda Furansukano garan no zu* 阿蘭陀フランスカノ伽藍之図, translates to "Franciscan monastery in Holland". During the late Edo period, only Dutch merchants were permitted to stay in Japan, confined to the small island of Dejima. They served as a fragile link connecting Japanese intellectuals with Western knowledge. This political context in Japan led to the misunderstanding of Roman landscapes as Dutch ones. The model for this *Uki-e* print is a capriccio landscape from William Austin's 1756 work, which drew inspiration from Giovanni Paolo Pannini.[3] It was part of a series of four engravings titled *Ruins of Ancient Rome*, none of which are direct copies of Pannini's originals. Austin appears to have combined Pannini-like Roman ruins with his own imagination in an engraving that was subsequently brought to Japan by a Dutch merchant. Toyoharu also produced a series of Dutch landscapes, including a depiction of Venice based on Antonio Visentini's engraving after Canaletto (Okano 1973, 16-17; Ōsawa 1994, 88-9).[4] *Uki-e* was a highly popular art form during the late eighteenth century, and foreign landscapes must have captivated Japanese viewers. As a result, though referred to as Dutch landscapes, images of the *Foro Romano* were seen as exotic Western scenes and were widely shared with the public in the city of Edo.

More detailed knowledge of Ancient Rome was finally introduced in 1853, when Mitsukuri Genpo 箕作阮甫 published *Kyokusei Shiei* 極西史影 (Historical Descriptions of Europe), a work based on Johannes Bosscha's book on universal history (Mitsukuri 1853).[5] Rangakusha including Mitsukuri, worked to gather information about Western societies for the Japanese government, which needed to prepare for negotiations with foreign powers in the mid-nineteenth century.

2 Kobe City Museum. Comparable *Uki-e* paintings, exhibiting minor variations in colour, can also be found in the collections of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (William Sturgis Bigelow Collection, inv. 11.16000), and the Machida City Museum of Graphic Art.

3 William Austin, *Ruins of Ancient Rome*. 1756. London, Robert Sayer. Available at `https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1949-1008-175`; Oka 2010, 182-3; Hiraizumi 2018, 113.

4 Kiyoharu utilised a printing of "Prospectus ab Sede S. Crucis ad P.P. Discalceatos" from A. Visentini, *Urbis Venetiarum Prospectus Celebriores*. Venice: Joannem Baptistam Pasquali, 1742-54. A fragment of Visentini's printing likely arrived in Japan through the activities of Dutch merchants.

5 He utilised Bosscha, J. (1838). *Schets der Algemeene Geschiedenis en van die des Vaderlands*. Breda: Broese.

Mitsukuri's Roman history begins with the Etruscans and provides detailed accounts of key events, such as the struggle between the patricians and plebeians, Augustus's establishment of the imperial system, the eruption of Vesuvius, and the fate of Pompeii and Herculaneum, including their excavation in 1756. The work also covers episodes from the reigns of Roman emperors. Although these books were handwritten and copied, the information was shared among Japanese intellectuals, marking the first appearance of details about archaeological sites in Italy.

Japan's isolationist policy during the late Edo period limited access to information about Roman antiquity. While fragmentary knowledge was conveyed through *Uki-e* paintings, these were primarily imagined landscapes and did not engage with or accurately reflect the archaeological remains of ancient Rome.

Figure 1 Attrib. Utagawa Toyoharu 歌川豊春, *Oranda Furansukano garan no zu* 阿蘭陀フランスカノ伽藍之図 (Franciscan monastery in Holland). 1770s-1880s. Kobe city Museum. Permission granted by the Kobe City Museum. This image/content is not covered by the terms of the Creative Commons licence of this publication. For permission to reuse, please contact the rights holder

3 The Growing Interest in Roman Antiquity During the Meiji Period

In 1868, the Meiji Restoration marked the beginning of Japan's modernisation and westernisation. The scholarship on Roman history developed during the late Edo period was passed down to scholars working for the Ministry of Education, who actively engaged in translation efforts and the creation of school textbooks. In 1872, when the Ministry established official guidelines for school curricula, universal history was introduced as a subject from the fourth year of upper elementary school (for 12-year-olds), with Greek and Roman history included as part of the curriculum (Okazaki 2016, 22). One of the assigned textbooks, *Roma Shiryaku* 羅馬史略 (Handbook of Roman History) published in 1874, introduced the basic history of Rome, beginning with geographical information and the foundation of the city **[fig. 2]**. It then covered key events such as the fall of Tarquinius Superbus, the establishment of the Republican system, the expansion of Roman territory, the arrival of Hannibal, the Punic Wars, Sulla, the First Triumvirate, the Second Triumvirate, Augustus and the establishment of the Imperial system, the reigns of both virtuous and tyrannical emperors, and the rule of Constantine (Ōtsuki 1874, 47-57). These textbooks were used as reading materials in the classroom, and the Ministry of Education's efforts gradually succeeded in imparting basic knowledge of Roman history to many young Japanese students.

Figure 2
Assassination of Caesar in Ōtsuki 1874, 105. National Diet Library Digital Collection

Alongside the introduction of a westernised education system, the firsthand experience of visiting Roman archaeological sites also began. The first significant account came from the Iwakura Mission 岩倉使節団, which embarked on a three-year journey to the United States and Europe in 1873 to negotiate the unequal treaties with foreign countries. The members of the Mission visited Pompeii and Herculaneum, providing the first Japanese travel diary about archaeological sites in Italy. One of the participants, Kume Kunitake 久米邦武, published *Beiō Kairan Jikki* 米欧回覧実記 (The Accounts of Iwakura Mission's Observation Journey in the United States and Europe) in 1878, based on his travel diary. In the sections of the book covering Italy, Kume focused particularly on the remains of Ancient Rome, as evidenced by the frequent etchings of archaeological landscapes (Fujisawa 2013, 128). In his draft for *Beiō Kairan Jikki*, Kume Kunitake also recorded the text of a Latin inscription from a bronze tablet and a hieroglyphic inscription he encountered during his visit to the Naples Archaeological Museum.[6] Although the texts of the ancient inscriptions did not appear in the published edition of *Beiō Kairan Jikki*, Kume Kunitake's interest in Antiquity is evident. His impressions of Roman archaeological remains, as described in the book, seem to have been influenced by Gibbon's work. The Mission visited sites such as the Foro Romano, the Palatine Hill, the Colosseum, the Baths of Caracalla, Pompeii, and Herculaneum, which were depicted as testaments to past prosperity and its subsequent decline. When Kume visited Rome, he wrote that the ancient remains of the city evoked the perished glory of its past.

> ローマの町並みはその多くが不規則、狭隘で、清掃が行き届いておらず、ほこりが目に入る。建物は大きいが古いものが多く、壮麗でない。周辺部に行くと雑草が茂り家は汚くて路もがたがたである。そんななかにところどころ2000年前の遺跡があり、あるいは地中から掘り出した遺物などもあって、滅び去ったものに対する感慨が湧く。(Kume 2008, 323)

> The cityscape of Rome is often irregular and narrow. The cleaning is not thorough, which leaves dust swirling into my eyes. While many of the buildings tend to be large and old, they lack grandeur. In the outskirts of the city, overgrown weeds dominate the scenery, houses appear unkempt, and the roads are bumpy. Amidst this setting, remnants of ancient ruins from 2,000 years ago can occasionally be found, along with artefacts unearthed

6 Fujisawa, Fujisawa 2011, 60; 65 fn. 8. Fujisawa and Fujisawa noted that the Latin text *P]OST QVUINQVUENIUM POP[VLEI* was from the bronze tablet of *Tabula Bembina* (inv. 2636), CIL I², 583. l.66).

> from beneath the ground, evoking a profound sense of reflection on the transience of past world.

He repeatedly compares Italy with northern countries (the United Kingdom, Germany, and France), asserting that the centre of prosperity in Europe shifted from south to north, and he regards Italy as a decayed nation (Kume 2008, 317-19). At that time, the capital of Italy had recently been moved from Florence to Rome, and urbanisation projects for the new capital were only just beginning. This situation may have led the Japanese delegates to perceive Italy as a fallen country.

By the late nineteenth century, Japanese intellectuals were already familiar with Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. In 1889, Takada Sanae 高田早苗, a politician and the chief editor of *Yomiuri Shinbun*, recommended in his book *Biji-gaku* 美辞学 (Study of Rhetoric) that Gibbon's work had served as an excellent guide for statesmen (Takada 1889, 35). The Japanese translation of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* was first published in 1918; however, many young intellectuals at the time read the English edition and shared the image of decline associated with the Roman Empire (Sakamoto 1918). Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石's bestselling novel, *Wagahai wa Neko dearu* 吾輩は猫である (I Am a Cat), includes an episode in which a Japanese student studies the works of Gibbon, Mommsen, and Smith to learn about the ancient Romans' practice of vomiting, particularly in relation to their bathing activities after luxurious dinners (Natsume 1905, 76).[7] Natsume graduated from the University of Tokyo in 1893, and after five years of study in London, he began teaching at his alma mater. He published *Wagahai wa Neko dearu* in 1905, which indicates that by this time, the name of Gibbon was already familiar to Japanese students.

4 Admiration for Ancient Roman Stone Culture and the Image of Rome

Another characteristic of *Beiō Kairan Jikki* can be seen in Kume's descriptions of archaeological sites. His writing was generally straightforward, but at times, he offered original insights, particularly regarding aspects of ancient Roman life, such as the supply of water, the remains of domestic tools in Pompeii, and the social function of the baths in Rome. He also paid particular attention to building materials, using them to highlight the appearance of Italian buildings and monuments (Kume 2008, 334-77). When Natsume arrived in

7 For *Wagahai wa Neko dearu* and ancient Greek and Roman material, see Townshend 2024.

Naples in 1900, marking his first step into Europe, he wrote in his diary that he was greatly surprised to see the stone-paved streets, as the entirely stone-built buildings and streets were completely new to him (Natsume 1919, 13-14). Given this background, it is not surprising that Japanese travellers focused on the stone materials at archaeological sites and their long-lasting durability.

As Tanigawa pointed out in the exhibition catalogue *Ruins in Art History*, the concept of 'ruins' was not present in Japanese thought before the westernisation of the Meiji period (Tanigawa 2018, 13). Traditionally, Japanese architecture was primarily constructed with wood, with stone used only for foundations. When such buildings were abandoned or destroyed, only the stone basements remained, making it rare to encounter collapsed walls or partially fallen ceilings as seen in archaeological sites in Italy. Especially from the seventeenth century, Europeans developed a fascination with ancient ruins, but this concept was entirely new to the Japanese.

Asano Nagakoto 浅野長勲, a Japanese ambassador in Italy, visited Pompeii in October 1882. His travel diary rarely includes personal comments; however, when discussing the public baths in Pompeii, he noted both the similarities and differences between ancient Roman and Japanese architecture.

> 浴湯店あり。往昔は吾か邦俗の如く数人浴せしものにて石造の浴器廣さ凡そ二三坪あり。今の如く格別に浴室を設けず衣服を脱し置く所は浴室の側らに石にて区域をなし吾か邦浴湯店の衣服棚に稍や類す只木石の異るのみ。(Asano 1884, 104-5)

> There is a public bathhouse. In the past, similar to our country, multiple people would bathe together, and the stone-made bathing tubs were approximately 2 to 3 tsubo in size. Unlike today, there were no individual bathrooms; instead, a changing area was located adjacent to the bathing room and the clothing shelves were made of stone. These changing areas were quite similar to the Japanese bathhouses, and the clothing shelves differs only in the material – being made of either stone or wood.

He also focused on the difference between stone and wood structures and expressed particular interest in the baths, a common custom shared by ancient Rome and Japan, which was rarely found in modern European countries.

In 1887, Tani Kanjō (谷干城), the Minister of Agriculture and Commerce, also visited Pompeii and left with a similar impression. Tani wrote that he was amazed at how the remains of the city preserved the daily lives of its people, despite having lived 1,700 years ago. He began his account of his experience in Pompeii by describing the building materials, noting that most of the

architecture was constructed with stone, roofing tiles, cement, and marble pillars. He also compared the stucco-covered Pompeian houses with the plastered walls of Japan. Additionally, he remarked that the lavishness of the hot baths must have corrupted the morals of the Romans (Tani 1976, 634).[8] When he visited Rome, Tani marveled at the enormous ancient baths once again and confessed that they must have been a paradise for visitors. In addition, he took note of the building materials and methods used at the Foro Romano, explaining that the bricks were covered with marble (638).[9]

Interestingly, the published edition of *Beiō Kairan Jikki* included etchings of the visited sites. As noted in the introduction, these images were added to provide a visual representation of the civilised countries to the Japanese people (Kume 1878a, 25-6; Kume Museum of Art 2006, 17). In the Italian section of *Beiō Kairan Jikki*, images of archaeological sites dominated the portrayal of the Italian landscape. Even sites that the travellers were unable to visit were included to showcase the archaeological heritage of Italy. For instance, when they passed through Verona, Kume expressed his regret at not being able to see the famous Arena, but its image was nonetheless included alongside his account (Kume 2008, 286) **[fig. 3]**. Such images must have impressed Japanese readers, as the ancient stone-built structures, which had stood for centuries, were a novel element for them.

The admiration for the image of ruins with stone-built structures in Italy spread through the visual images in other published books. When Aoki Tsunesaburō 青木恒三郎 published a series of illustrated books on world-famous sites between 1885 and 1890 in seven volumes, he dedicated many pages to depicting the story and remains of Pompeii (Aoki 1886, 76-84) **[fig. 4]**. This series became popular among the Japanese, making images of Italian archaeological sites widely accessible in Japan.

8 The visits of members of the Japanese Imperial Family and officials in the late nineteenth century were also documented in Italian records. Cf. Ascione 1997, 210-11.

9 He also left numerous comments on the baths in Pompeii.

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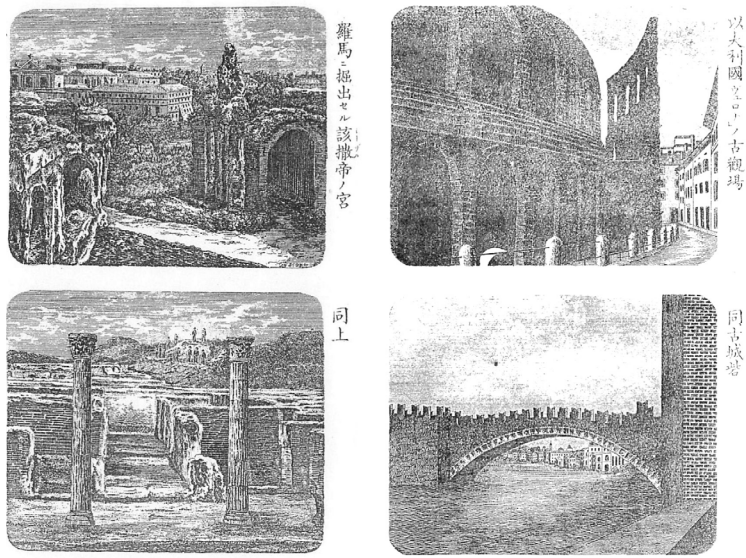

Figure 3 The illustrations in *Beiō Kairan Jikki.* Upper right: The Arena of Verona; lower right: The Wall of Verona (Kume 1878b, 282). Upper left: Imperial Palaces in Rome; lower left: Imperial Palaces in Rome (Kume 1878b, 356). Waseda University Library

Figure 4 The illustrations of Pompei. Aoki (1886, 76-7). National Diet Library Digital Collection

On the other hand, the fascination with the fate of Pompeii can be seen in the publication of Edward Bulwer-Lytton's *The Last Days of Pompeii* in Japan. The first translation was published as early as 1879. To provide the historical context of Pompeii and the Roman world for readers, the translator included introductory notes on Rome, Pompeii, Isis, Venus, and Thessaly, with the explanation that most readers were already familiar with these topics (Niwa 1879, 1-4). These books contain numerous illustrations, but all of them depict ancient Roman scenes in a manner that resembles modern European settings **[fig. 5]**. Although the accurate depiction of ancient Roman imagery would have to wait a few more years, the success of this translation undoubtedly contributed to the spread of basic knowledge about Roman antiquity and sparked an increasing curiosity about it.

Figure 5 The eruption of Vesuvius and the destruction of Pompei (Bulwer-Lytton 1878, 76-7). National Diet Library Digital Collection

5 The Influence of Artists and Academic Scholars' Visits to Archaeological Sites in Italy

With the growing interest in Roman antiquity, Japanese specialists began to visit archaeological sites in Italy. During the Meiji period, the Japanese authorities regarded Italy as a country of great artistic heritage. When the government selected *Oyatoi Gaikokujin* (foreign experts) to introduce Western knowledge and technology, three

Italians were specifically chosen in the field of arts: Edoardo Chiossone for banknote printing, Antonio Fontanesi for oil painting, and Vincenzo Ragusa for sculpture. Fontanesi was invited to teach at the newly established *Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō* 工部美術学校 (Technical Art School) in 1876.[10] As Hiraizumi noted, Fontanesi introduced the concept of "ruin" to Japan through his work (Hiraizumi 2018, 113). During his tenure teaching Japanese students from 1876 to 1878, Fontanesi used his own drawings, which depicted the remains of a Roman aqueduct and desolate ancient ruins. These drawings were then copied by his students as part of their exercises (Shōtō Museum 2018, 60-1). He brought photographs of European masterpieces, etchings, plaster casts of famous Greek and Roman sculptures, and other materials to his classes. These were used to educate Japanese students about European paintings and artistic heritage (Matsuoka 1942, 30).

Fontanesi taught in Japan for only two years, but during that time, he introduced the imagery of Italian artworks and a glimpse of Italian landscapes to his students. As mentioned earlier, the Italian landscape, particularly with its ancient Roman ruins, was a novel concept for the Japanese, who were accustomed to wooden buildings. This was equally unfamiliar to Japanese artists. One of Fontanesi's pupils, Matsuoka Hisashi, decided to pursue further study in Western-style painting and chose to go to Rome. From 1880, he studied under the Italian painter Cesare Maccari, and from 1881 to 1887, he attended the Regio Instituto di Belle Arti in Rome (Aoki et al. 2002, 16-27). His main area of interest was portraiture, but he also left us a painting depicting the landscape of Rome with an archaeological monument, the Arch of Constantine **[fig. 6]**. As an art student, he was granted permission for free access to the archaeological sites in Rome in 1881, and it is likely that he painted such impressive landscape during his productive years of study (Aoki et al. 2002, 15-16). He brought his artworks back with him when he returned to Japan, and three similar paintings are preserved to this day.[11]

10 For the details of *Kōbu Bijutsu Gakkō* and Italy, see Kawakami 2011.

11 Okayama prefectural Museum of Art (see `http://jmapps.ne.jp/okayamakenbi/det.html?data_id=2408`); Tokyo National Museum (inv. A-11238) (see `https://colbase.nich.go.jp/collection_items/tnm/A-11238?locale=ja`); The University Art Museum, Tokyo University of the Arts (see `https://jmapps.ne.jp/geidai/det.html?data_id=4327`).

Figure 6 Matsuoka Hisashi 松岡壽, *Triumphal Arch* 凱旋門. C. 1882. Okayama Prefectural Museum of Art. Permission granted by Okayama Prefectural Museum of Art This image/content is not covered by the terms of the Creative Commons licence of this publication. For permission to reuse, please contact the rights holder

In addition to Western-art painters, Japanese-art painters also began to show an interest in Roman Antiquity. With the introduction of Western art in Japan, Japanese-art painters sought to study Western techniques to expand their expressive capabilities and create more refined works of art (Takashina 2008, 79-80). Takeuchi Seihō (竹内栖鳳) visited Rome in 1900 and created one of his notable artworks, *The Landscapes of Rome*. This painting portrays the Claudian Aqueduct and the Temple of Minerva Medica, combining elements of Western architecture with Japanese artistic techniques.[12] Takeuchi Seihō also left a comment about his impression of the Roman archaeological remains.

> 余が羅馬に入りパラチ(パラティーノ)の近傍を遥したる時は実に人間栄枯盛衰の感に打たれて形象物体こそ異れ一篇の唐詩に対するの感ありたり。若し技能ある人が写せば必ず面白きものを得んと固く居じたりしなり。(Hiraizumi, 2018, 114)
>
> When I visited Rome and walked through the area of Palatine, I was struck by the vicissitudes of human fortune. All the objects

12 Takeuchi Seihō, *The landscapes of Rome*. Available at `https://bunka.nii.ac.jp/heritages/detail/250675`.

> seemed like a Chinese poem. If a young, talented artist were to depict this landscape, I am certain it would become a great work.

Another Japanese-art painter, Yoshida Hiroshi (吉田博), travelled abroad twice, first from 1899 to 1901, and again from 1903 to 1906.[13] After his return, Yoshida published his travel memoir in 1907, which encompasses both of his trips abroad. In his memoir, Yoshida recommends visiting the archaeological site.

> 廃趾(ルイン)に向かって足を向ける人は、大抵羅馬公場(ローマンフォーラム)を見落とす者はあるまい。(Yoshida 1907, 232)
>
> Anyone who appreciates ruins will not miss the Foro Romano.

As these words suggest, he focuses not on the ancient buildings themselves, but on the ruined landscape. Not only did he visit the Foro Romano, Palatine Hill, and the Baths of Caracalla, where he noted the fragmented marbles and fallen pillars, but he also walked along the Appian Way, sketching the landscape with its iconic pine trees and the remains of destroyed Roman aqueducts (Yoshida 1907, 232-5). As mentioned earlier, Japanese wooden buildings were fragile and unable to withstand the passage of time, making the stone-built remains of ancient Rome particularly captivating for Japanese-art painters. These artists were drawn to the enduring nature of the Roman ruins, which offered a powerful medium through which to express the pathos of impermanence and the passage of time.

Alongside artists, young Japanese scholars in the humanities began to travel abroad to gain in-depth academic knowledge during the same period. In 1902, the Ministry of Education selected three historians to study in Europe, marking a significant opportunity for Japanese historians. This was a noteworthy development, as most of the governmental scholarships up to that point had been awarded to scholars in fields such as science, politics, and jurisprudence.[14] One of the historians selected for this opportunity was Murakawa Kengo 村川堅固, who was tasked with studying ancient history due to the lack of a professor in this field at the University of Tokyo's history department. Murakawa departed from Yokohama in January 1903 for a travel period of three years and five months. According to his registration records at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich,

13 National Institute for Cultural Heritage, "Yoshida Hiroshi" in *Nihon Bijutsu Nenkan*, Shōwa 22-26 edition, 142-3. Available at `https://www.tobunken.go.jp/materials/bukko/8879.html`.

14 Several journal articles in 1902 celebrate the first selection of historians for the governmental scholarships for study abroad. *Chūō Kouron* 中央公論 17-12 (1902), 61: *Rekishi Chiri* 歴史地理 4-9 (1902), 102-3.

Murakawa attended several courses during his time there. These included three Greek and Roman history courses taught by Robert von Pöhlmann, five archaeology courses led by Adolf Furtwängler, a church history course by Alois Knöpfler, and a history seminar led by Kurt Riezler during the summer semester of 1903 and the winter semester of 1903-04.[15] Although his future position was intended to be that of a professor of ancient history, Murakawa enrolled in more archaeology courses than history ones. Armed with the archaeological knowledge he acquired in Munich, he visited Italy on his return to Japan, from November 1905 to March 1906. During this journey, Murakawa meticulously recorded daily events and expenses in small notebooks. His Italian travel diary survives only partially, beginning with his departure from Rome and ending when he boarded a passenger ship at Brindisi. However, it includes the names of the places he visited and his impressions of them. Drawing on the knowledge he had previously acquired, he compares various sites, such as the Certosa di San Martino in Naples with the Certosa di Pavia, the Basilica of Pompei with the Basilica Julia in Rome, and the Serapeum in Pozzuoli with the Forum in Ostia, making comparisons based on the materials used and the architectural plans.[16]

In his travel diary, Murakawa expresses admiration for the striking landscape of the Ciani River, with its abundant papyrus plants, and the grandeur of the Latomia dei Cappuccini. However, he does not focus as much on the archaeological sites themselves. This is likely due to his previous visits to Roman archaeological sites and his methodical approach to observation, which prevented him from viewing these locations with the typical tourist's sense of awe and wonder.[17] As a specialist in Greek and Roman history, Murakawa stayed in Pompeii for four days, from February 27, 1906, and visited the archaeological sites from morning until closing time. In his diary, he mostly recorded the names of the places he visited, occasionally adding more detailed information. Like many other Japanese travellers of the time, he showed a particular interest in the building materials used at the sites.

> 其次にバシリカの趾あり。これは前者に比し、よく保存され居れども、建築材料は凝灰岩を主として、円柱の如き、ピラーの如き、煉瓦石を中心として、凝灰岩にて包みたるものなれば、其壮麗に於てはローマのバシリカ・

15 Murakawa family's Private Archive. Königl. Bayer. Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität. Zeugnis zum Abgange von der Universität.

16 Murakawa family's Private Archive. Travel Diary, February 23, 1906 (Certosa di San Martino and Pavia); February 27, 1906 (Basilica of Pompeii and Rome); February 25, 1906 (*Serapium* and *Forum* in Ostia).

17 Murakawa family's Private Archive. Travel Diary March 7, 1906 (Ciani river); March 8, 1906 (Latomia).

ジュリア等に比すべくもあらず。(Murakawa family's Private Archive. Travel Diary February 27, 1906 (Pompeii))

Next, there are the remains of a basilica. Compared to the previous structure, this one is relatively well-preserved. However, the primary construction material is tuff, and elements such as columns and pillars consist of brick cores encased in tuff. As a result, its grandeur cannot be compared to that of Roman structures like the Basilica Julia.

左折すれば既に有名 なるポセイドンの社及其南にある所謂「バジリカ」明に認めらる。 社は皆荒草の間に岐立し、純然たるドーリック式にして、材料は小孔の縦貫せる石灰石にして、時代を歴て、今は茶褐色を呈し居れり。(Murakawa family's Private Archive. Travel Diary March 3, 1906 (Paestum))

As I turn left, I can distinctly make out the renowned Temple of Poseidon and the so-called "Basilica" to its south. The temples rise amidst overgrown grass, constructed in the Doric style clearly. Their material, limestone perforated with small vertical holes, has weathered over time and its colour turned to a deep, earthy brown.

Although Murakawa had specifically studied archaeology in Germany, his frequent references to the variety of stones at the archaeological sites reflect a shared interest with other Japanese travellers. This focus on materials further emphasises the Japanese fascination with the stone culture of ancient Rome and its enduring presence in the Italian landscape.

During and after his travels, Murakawa published several short articles based on his travel diary. His enthusiasm for photography at the archaeological sites is mentioned numerous times in the diary. The photographs he took and purchased in Italy were frequently featured in his later pedagogical articles, contributing significantly to the dissemination of authentic images of Roman archaeological remains. These images played an important role in shaping the understanding of ancient Rome for Japanese teachers and students who were tasked with studying world history.

Murakawa's later article on the city of Rome, published in the pedagogical journal *Kyōiku Gahō* 教育画報 (Illustrated Journal for Education), offers a personal reflection on the archaeological remains in Rome.

こんな古い時から今日まで—たとえ其の間に非常な栄枯盛衰があり、建設と破壊とが度々繰り返されたとはいえ—(中略)首府としての命脈を保持して来たのであるから、此都に史蹟の豊富であることは当然である。いわんや我が国の古都の如く、其営造物が木造でなく、煉瓦や大理石を始め、

> 各種の石を以て作られて居るため、千歳の星霜にも腐朽の憂がなく、たとえ崩壊して土中に埋もれても、之を発掘すれば、昔ながらの建築材料が続々現われて来る(中略)。何気なく市中を散歩して居ても、全然現代風を離れた千年二千年前の古建築の一部や、古城壁の残りなどに往きあたって(中略)そぞろに懐古の情をそそり立つるのである。(Murakawa 1915, 171-2)

> From antiquity to the present – despite numerous cycles of prosperity and decline, and the repeated construction and destruction – […] this city has consistently sustained its role as a capital. It is therefore unsurprising that it abounds in historical landmarks. Unlike Japanese ancient cities, where structures were primarily wooden, the edifices in Rome have been built using durable materials such as brick, marble, and various types of stone. These materials, impervious to the ravages of time even over millennia, ensure the preservation of architectural remnants. Even when structures collapse and are buried, excavation reveals a wealth of original building materials. […] A casual stroll through the city may lead one to encounter fragments of ancient edifices or remnants of old walls, their origins stretching back one or two thousand years. Such encounters, distinct from anything modern, […] naturally evoke a profound sense of nostalgia and reverence for the past.

He compared the stone-made Roman archaeological remains with the wooden architecture of Japan, noting that the ruins of Antiquity, standing amidst the modern city, prompted him to reflect on the passage of history. Murakawa's admiration for Italian archaeological ruins was conveyed to young Japanese readers through such pedagogical articles, contributing to the dissemination of authentic information and imagery of Ancient Rome, alongside his academic activities.

Figure 7 Murakawa's photographs during his travel in 1906. At left: the *Foro Romano*; at right: the Appian Way. Private Collection. Courtesy of Murakawa Natsuko This image/content is not covered by the terms of the Creative Commons licence of this publication. For permission to reuse, please contact the rights holder

6 Conclusions

Japanese travellers frequently compared the wooden culture of Japan with the stone-built culture of Ancient Rome. The remains of ancient Roman architecture set within the modern landscape were a novel element for Japanese travellers, ranging from government officials to historians. They also perceived parallels between ancient Rome and Japan, particularly in their shared cultural emphasis on bathing. In the late nineteenth century, certain Victorian intellectuals and artists began to associate Japan with Greece, and British travellers to Japan recorded observations of similarities not only in clothing but also in everyday lifestyle practices in their travelogues (Ono 2003, 36-40). The classical image attributed to Japanese art contributed to the rise of Japonisme in Europe; however, this "classical" image was at times conflated with that of Greek art. There is no clear evidence that such European perspectives were shared within Japan. In 1915, the Japanese painters Fujita Tsuguharu (藤田嗣治) and Kawashima Riichirō (川島理一郎), residing in Paris, partook in a playful re-enactment of ancient Greek-style living in Reignac. However, their inspiration stemmed from Raymond Duncan's performances of Greek dance rather than any direct admiration for ancient Greece (Murakami 2013, 32; 42).[18] In this context – within a nation still undergoing Westernisation – the discovery of perceived similarities between Japan and ancient Rome must have made a striking impression on Japanese travellers. With the increasing interest in Roman archaeological sites, the study of archaeology in Japan also gained traction. One such example of this was a book intended for children, which contributed to broadening awareness and understanding of ancient Rome and its archaeological remains. Indeed, in 1907, *Otoghi Ryokou Sekai Meguri* お伽旅行世界めぐり (Fairy Travel All Around the World), tells the story of a young Japanese boy named Tarō who embarks on a journey around the world. For the Italy chapter, Pompei serves as his first destination. The book describes the city of Pompei as one that was buried by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. The focus of Tarō's curiosity in the narrative lies primarily in the process of archaeological excavation, rather than in the specific details of the site itself (Fukuda 1907, 14-16). When Tarō asked, "It was a surprise that someone noticed this ancient subterranean city and excavated it", an Italian man responded by explaining the history of Pompei's rediscovery and excavation. The Italian man shared the following details: people had been aware of

18 Their Greek-inspired lifestyle was recorded in Kawashima's diary. Kawashima Riichirō, *Illustrated Diary*, 26 June, 1915. Tochigi Prefectural Museum. Tochigi Digital Museum "SHUGYOKU". Available at https://www.digitalmuseum.pref.tochigi.lg.jp/museweb/detail?cls=collect3b&pkey=%E6%96%87%E8%B3%87-000646.

the buried city's existence as early as around 1700. An archaeologist began the excavations in 1867, and with the help of 80 workers, he succeeded in uncovering most of the city by 1870. However, fieldwork activities continued, as evidenced by the ongoing work at the site. The name of the archaeologist in 1867 was written as *Fuhioruha* フヒオルハー, but it is likely referring to Giuseppe Fiorelli, who is credited with the major early excavations of Pompei.[19] The efforts of Italian archaeologists were highlighted in this book as having significant value for international scholarship, and the excavations at Pompeii were regarded as an important and fascinating subject that Japanese children in the early twentieth century should be familiar with.

In later years, many Japanese tourists visited Rome, with some exploring the House of the esteemed archaeologist Giacomo Boni on the Palatine Hill (Fukuyama, Pilutti Namer 2018). Such interest in ancient Roman history and archaeology was gradually nurtured through the efforts of the individuals discussed in this article, whose contributions have, until now, never been presented in a comprehensive overview. Travel to Europe during the Meiji period remained a privileged experience for the Japanese. Artists and scholars visited historical sites with specific intentions, often aiming to study them to enrich their academic research or artistic practice. However, Italian archaeological ruins also attracted aristocratic politicians such as Asano and Tani. Their interest in antiquity, despite not being rooted in academic pursuits, testifies to a broader cultural curiosity. The impressions they recorded in published works contributed to increasing interest in Ancient Rome within Japan. Their works not only fostered cross-cultural appreciation but also laid the groundwork for academic and cultural exchanges between Japan and Italy, promoting knowledge of Italy's archaeological heritage in Japan and underscoring the lasting significance of these early connections.

19 The name begins with 'F' and given the period of activity, this Italian archaeologist appears to be Giuseppe Fiorelli.

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