

**THE FASCINATION OF KNOWLEDGE
JAPANESE ENCYCLOPEDIAS AND SOFT POWER
– A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW –**

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ABSTRACT: *Emerged at the intersection between Japanese classical knowledge, mainly of Chinese origin, and imported Western technology as well as technical know-how, Japanese encyclopedias reflect Japan's ambitions to become a modern superpower. In a comparable way as Western encyclopedias, Japanese encyclopedias deal, on one hand, with knowledge conceptualization and organization as means to enforce a specific worldview as human experience and progress, and transcend, on the other hand, hidden interactions between knowledge and information in a transcultural historical context. While focusing on some of the most representative of Japanese encyclopedias, it is this paper's goal to highlight some of the strategies employed by leading intellectual and political figures in Japan's history to implement a knowledge system according to Western standards, but patterned upon own cultural and spiritual heritage. Beyond translation and sedimentation through appropriation there is the performative power of language – and its identification mechanisms. The transition from ethics to aesthetics and from imagination to ideology in the marketing of knowledge as educational enterprise reflects the metamorphosis of Japanese encyclopedias as genre from an insignificant socio-cultural medium to a powerful political-economic message in late-premodern and modern Japan as well as Japan's emerging awareness from being an "outsider" of the Western world to gradually becoming an "insider" of the Asian community.*

Keywords: *Japanese encyclopaedias, Wamyô ruijushô, Kôsei shinpen, Nishi Amane, Hyakugaku renkan.*

Introduction: Japanese encyclopedias – an anthropological Inquiry. The German philosopher Hans Jörg Sandkühler stated in his manifesto from the year 2000:

“it is the role of the encyclopedia to save the concepts and to make orientation possible. Within encyclopedia, not only the past should be preserved, but also the reality as present and experience should be kept and organized. The role of encyclopedia is to create human worlds for tomorrow and to safeguard them, to act as agents to transmit and implement *sensus communis* [common sense] – that is, ‘independent thinking’, ‘integration of the self among the others’ and ‘thinking without contradictions’ – in times of ethical turnovers. Encyclopedia offer ideological support during social, political, economical and cultural crises, put order in disordered societies and not at last, organize the judging capacity of individuals in moments of confusion.” (Sandkühler 2000:79)

Such an important role of encyclopedias as ordering mechanism comes from their subliminal power to order alphabetically – that is, impartially – material and immaterial issues. It is through the abstract power of knowledge which turns into concrete power to be used in very concrete affairs that encyclopedias gained their special place among other literary genres and printed forms. Encyclopedia as means of soft power is namely an issue taken into account by producers – that is, publishing houses - and manipulators of political, economic or cultural power to control and move social actors – readerships of encyclopedia. Thus, it is this paper's goal to outline some of the strategies employed by Japanese encyclopedia makers to construct a solid ideological background via floating aesthetic migration. The transition from imagination to ideology and from ethics to aesthetics in encyclopedic practice reflects the transformation of encyclopedias' role from an insignificant socio-cultural medium to a powerful politic-economic message in modern Japan. With this basic assumption, I shall try to point out the history of encyclopedic practice in Japan while underlining its soft power-like characteristics. To illustrate this ambivalent relationship between knowledge and power, I shall proceed in two steps. Firstly, I shall explain the two keywords of this paper – encyclopedia respectively Japanese encyclopedia; secondly, I shall present

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a brief history of Japanese encyclopedias as seen through the prism of soft power and the interaction between knowledge as a means of power as it develops into a state mechanism while transgressing imagination into ideology and ethics into aesthetics. My analysis has two levels: there is the intrinsic level, where the text of the entries is to be taken into account, its form and contents as well as – when possible – its background. On the second level, the extrinsic one, the historical context of the encyclopedias is to be considered: the cultural, social, economic, political on-goings as well as the interaction between them. In my cognitive-anthropological approach, it might be of major importance that I refer to encyclopedias regarding them in the larger context of their emergence and development rather than as linguistic artefacts. Anthropologically regarded, there are two levels of encyclopedic practice to be taken into account in the forthcoming analysis: as form and as contents. The five paradigms of encyclopedic form include their position in the stress ratio between media and message as these terms were defined and implemented by Marshall McLuhan. Furthermore, encyclopedias exist traditionally as knowledge containers and means of knowledge organization, systematization, transmission and preservation as the analysts Hans Jörg Sandkühler, Michel Foucault and Firtz Machlup see them; on the other hand, Zygmunt Bauman and Mike Featherstone employ the term encyclopedia in the surrounding of knowledge transfer, translation and transgression. A further knowledge paradigm appears in the context of [over]specialized knowledge, as Bauman puts it. Manuel Castells refers to encyclopedias as timely conceptions, and in Slavoj Žižek's writings they are subject of gendered readings to reflect and enforce the male-female asymmetries. However, in the stress ratio between being represented and representing, as Joy Hendry puts it, encyclopedias appear as compound knowledge and socialized form of knowledge on the marketed world of knowledge display and knowledge control: Complex relations of submission (*Unterwerfung*) and repression (*Unterdrückung*) in Foucault's parlance as well as of knowledge inversion and subversion as Yoshimi Shun'ya refers to it, emerge and designate four paradigms of encyclopedic contents: Firstly, there is the balance between self (identity) and other (alterity), as Butler and Kristeva in the textual analysis of literary forms stress. Secondly, there is the evolution from ethics to aesthetics and from imagination to ideology, as to be found in writings by Jacques Lacan, Gernot Böhme, Terry Eagleton and Raymond Williams. Thirdly, there is the tension between text as discursive formation and image as non-discursive representation, as Kristeva and Augé refer in their regardings of contemporary phenomena. Fourthly, there is the narrative level of the printed materials and the meta-narrative level of the sources, institutions, authors, spatio-temporal contexts, readerships, as to be found in Geertz's, Kristeva's and Foucault's analytics of power relationships in times of cultural reproduction.) Japanese encyclopedias are called *hyakka jiten* 百科事典 which literally means "book of many subjects" or in contemporary Japanese "book of hundred subjects"; alternatively, the term *hyakka zensho* literally meaning "comprehensive writings of hundred/many subjects" is used. However, if one recalls that the term 'encyclopedia' in European languages means general or everyday education or study as derived from the Greek terms ἐγκύκλιος παιδεία *enkyklios paideia* (*enkyklios* = everyday, common, usual; and *paideia* = education, teaching), the semantic switch in case of Japanese encyclopedia seems to be drawn back to Nishi Amane, one of the main promoters of Westernization in Japan after its re-opening towards the West in 1868. In Japan's transition from a feudal archipelago to a modern nation-state, Nishi Amane's *Hyakugaku renkan* (1870-1871) played a decisive role as linguistic performance to employ Judith Butler's term of self-stylizing identity. From that moment on, in the first half of its modernity, Japan would attempt what one could call a gamble with power: inventing the nation in the maelstrom of historical turmoils with the concurrent dissipation of stocks of knowledge and the insinuation of flows of information, as Maclup would later call the process of crystallization of knowledge out of fugitive information. Nishi proposed as early as 1870, as to be shown in the lines below on early modern encyclopedia in Japan, the translation of the encyclopedia concept as "chain of several sciences" in his seminal lecture series with the English title *Encyclopedia* and the subtitle *Hyakugaku renkan* (his translation of the European term 'encyclopedia') meaning "Chain of many sciences". Nishi Amane drives his denomination of encyclopedia back to the original meaning of the concept 'encyclopedia': *enkyklios* (something which becomes usual, common due to its circular return and repetition in time) and *paideia* (education, cultivation) did not mean since Quintilian only everyday

knowledge/education, but a kind of completed circle of education/study as to be presumably conceptualized through the canon of the *Artes liberales* containing seven disciplines. The canon was extended during the 16th-17th centuries to over 100 disciplines and discipline fields to cover universal knowledge and was organized systematically, as Johann Heinrich Alsted stated in his seminal work *Encyclopaedia Cursus Philosophici* (1630). Drawing back to this anthropologically nuanced meaning of encyclopedia as work to include universal knowledge from different disciplines organized systematically, Nishi Amane established the concept of Japanese encyclopedia as writings to transmit and implement general knowledge in a systematized manner; his term *hyakugaku renkan* would not survive, however, being replaced by *hyakka zensho* or, later, *hyakka jiten* while the semantic contents stayed the one proposed by Amane on the basis of his interpretation of Western encyclopedia as concept and knowledge paradigm. Nishi Amane's *Hyakugaku renkan* and its ethics of the nation as common knowledge through education stress the role of discursive performativities – another key term in Butler's formulation of identity – towards the creation of a national self, as to be accomplished in the infamous year 1984 when the Japanese encyclopedic school comparable with its German, French or British counterpart was established through the release of the Heibonsha, Shogakukan and English-version of Kôdansha. The centripetal and centrifugal effect of knowledge, as Castells calls modern processes of power fluctuations, find in Nishi Amane's *Hyakugaku renkan* and its ambivalent organization of Western, Chinese and Japanese thought and thinking structures their early concretizations. It is, potentially, in the frugal notes of this lecture series to be sought the very core of Japan's astonishingly fast modernization and its miraculous postwar resurrection.

2. From knowledge to power: a history of Japanese encyclopedias

The undeniable and double-directioned relationship between knowledge and power is a truism. To see how this relationship concretized in Japan's case as one of, in its turn, most ambivalent and contradictory instances of the modern world, in the following moments I shall trace back in time the emergence and development of Japanese encyclopedias in the light of the soft power concept. Accordingly, one can notice a three-stage process in re-constructing this relationship in the Japanese context. Contrary to the prevalent opinion that encyclopedias are not available in Japan, it becomes obvious at a closer look that they can trace their origins to the early Heian period, in the ninth century. Encyclopedic works had been published in Japan for well over a thousand years before Japan's first modern encyclopedias were published after Japan's opening to the West, during the Meiji period (1868-1912). Furthermore, several encyclopedias have been published in Japan since World War II, including several children's encyclopedias, and two major titles are currently digitally available as well: the Encyclopedia Nipponica published by Shogakukan, and the Sekai Dai-Hyakka jiten, compiled by the Heibonsha publishing company. One important encyclopedia was from Kôdansha, in Japanese as well as in English.

2.1. Internalizing otherness: Japanese premodern encyclopedias

Contrary to the prevalent opinion that encyclopedia are available in Japan only since its modernization and hasty import of Western civilization patterns, one can trace the origins of encyclopedia or encyclopedia-like works as far back as the early Heian period (794-1185/1192), in the ninth century. The antecedents of the modern Japanese encyclopedia date from the ancient period and the Middle Ages. Encyclopedic books were imported from China from an early date, but the first proto-encyclopedia produced in Japan was the 1000-scroll *Hifuryaku* (秘府略, literally "Summary of the Palace Library"), compiled in 831 upon the emperor's orders by Shigeno no Sadanushi 滋野貞主 and others, only fragments of which survive today. The first truly Japanese-style encyclopedia is said to be Minamoto no Shitagô's 源順 (911-983) 10-scroll work *Wamyô ruijushô* 倭名類聚抄 from 938, which literally means *Lexicon of Japanese readings of words or Japanese names [for things] classified and annotated*, begun in 934 at the request of Emperor

Daigō's daughter.² Written in the ancient Japanese syllabary system *man'yōgana* (a system using *kanji* to represent Japanese pronunciation) and based on an ancient lexicographical collation system developed in Chinese dictionaries), the *Wamyō ruijushō* contains entries arranged by category and categorizes *kanji* vocabulary, primarily nouns, into 24 main headings (*bu* 部) divided into 128 subheadings (*rui* 類). For instance, the *tenchi* (天地 "heaven and earth") heading includes eight semantic divisions like *seishuku* (星宿 "stars and constellations"), *un'u* (雲雨 "clouds and rain"), and *fūsetsu* (風雪 "wind and snow").

The *Wamyō ruijushō* is the oldest extant Japanese dictionary organized into semantic headings, analogous to a Western language thesaurus. This ancient lexicographical collation system was developed in several Chinese dictionaries. Each dictionary entry gives the Chinese character, sources cited, Chinese pronunciations (with either a homonym or *fanqie* spelling), definitions, and corresponding Japanese readings (in ancient *man'yōgana*). It cites over 290 sources, both Chinese (for example, the *Shouwen Jiezi*) and Japanese (the *Man'yōshū*). The *Wamyō ruijushō* survives in both a 10-volume edition (十卷本) and a 20-volume edition (二十卷本). The larger one was published in 1617 with a commentary by Nawa Dōen (那波道円, 1595-1648) and was used in the Edo period until the 1883 publication of the 10-volume edition annotated by Kariya Ekisai (狩谷棧齋, 1775-1835), also known as the *Senchū Wamyō ruijushō* (箋注倭名類聚抄 "Annotated commentary *Wamyō ruijushō*"). The 10-volume edition has 24 main headings divided into a total of 128 subheadings, while the 20-volume version has 32 and 249, respectively. The table below illustrates how words are semantically categorized in the 10-volume edition. The broadly inclusive *Wamyō ruijushō* dictionary was an antecedent for Japanese encyclopedias. In the present day, it provides linguists and historians with an invaluable record of the Japanese language over 1000 years ago (Bailey 1960:4-6, 18-19, Okimori 1996:287-288).

Heading	Rōmaji	Kanji	Translation	Subjects
1	<i>Tenchi</i>	天地	Universe	constellations, weather, gods, earth, topography
2	<i>Jinrin</i>	人倫	Humans	gender, kinship, family, marriage
3	<i>Keitai</i>	形体	Body	body parts, sense organs, internal organs
4	<i>Shippei</i>	疾病	Sickness	diseases, wounds
5	<i>Jutsugei</i>	術藝	Arts	martial arts, fine arts, skills
6	<i>Kyosho</i>	居處	Architecture	houses, walls, doors, roads
7	<i>Sensha</i>	舟車	Vehicles	boats, carts, carriages
8	<i>Chinpō</i>	珍寶	Treasures	precious metals, jewels
9	<i>Fuhaku</i>	布帛	Textiles	embroidery, silks, woven fabrics
10	<i>Shōzoku</i>	装束	Clothing	hats, clothes, belts, shoes
11	<i>Inshoku</i>	飲食	Foods and Drinks	liquors, beverages, cooked grains, fruits, meats
12	<i>Kibei</i>	器皿	Utensils	objects of metal, lacquer, wood, tile, and bamboo
13	<i>Tōka</i>	燈火	Illumination	lamps, lights, lighting
14	<i>Chōdo</i>	調度	Things and Supplies	implements, tools, weapons, utensils,

² This *Wamyō ruijushō* title is abbreviated as *Wamyōshō*, and has graphic variants of 和名類聚抄 with wa and "harmony; Japan" for wa 倭 "dwarf; Japan" and 倭名類聚鈔 with shō 鈔 "copy; summarize" for shō 抄 "copy; annotate".

				furnishings
15	<i>Uzoku</i>	羽族	Birds	birds, feathers, ornithology
16	<i>Mōgun</i>	毛群	Wild Animals	wild animals, body parts
17	<i>Gyūsha</i>	牛馬	Domestic Animals	cattle, horses, sheep, body parts, diseases
18	<i>Ryōgo</i>	龍魚	Aquatic animals	dragons, fish, reptiles, amphibians
19	<i>Kibai</i>	龜貝	Shellfishes	turtles, shellfish
20	<i>Chūchi</i>	蟲豸	Miscellaneous Animals	insects, worms, small reptiles
21	<i>Tōkoku</i>	稻穀	Grains	rices, cereals
22	<i>Saiso</i>	菜蔬	Vegetables	tubers, seaweeds, edible plants
23	<i>Kayu</i>	果蓏	Fruits	fruits, melons
24	<i>Sōmoku</i>	草木	Plants	grasses, mosses, vines, flowers, trees

Passing over the 13th century *Chiribukuro* (塵袋, literally, “Rubbish Bag”), an 11-scroll book on the origins of things whose innovative question-and-answer format was much imitated throughout the medieval period, one comes to the Tokugawa period (1602-1868), as Japan closed itself to the Western world for more than 250 years. During this time, there were sustained efforts to create an own system as alternative to the imperialist-colonialist ethos from outside, especially from the West. This system was basically founded upon the Confucianist doctrine and took China as model. However, towards the end of the shogunate regime, as economical, political and social problems became uncontrollable, there was a paradigm shift from Chinese models to Western ones, especially transported by the so-called Dutch studies (*rangaku*). Two works played in this context a most important role.

The first work to be taken into account was *Wakan sansai zue*: In the 17th century, the *Sancai Tuhui* (三才図会 *Sansai Zue* in Japanese, literally, *Illustrated book of the Three Powers*), a 14-part, 106-scroll illustrated encyclopedia published in Ming China in 1609, entered Japan. In 1712, emulating the *Sancai Tuhui*, Terajima Ryōan 寺島良安, a doctor from Ōsaka, published the above mentioned *Wakan Sansai Zue* (和漢三才図会, literally *Illustrated book of the three powers in Japan and China*), the first Japanese illustrated encyclopedia. Written in classical Chinese which was the language of scholarship throughout East Asia at the time, the book featured illustrations of subjects in the three worlds of heaven, earth, and humanity/man and reflected the outlook of its day with such fantastical entries as "The Country of the Immortals" (不死国 *fushi koku*) and "The Land of the Long-Legged People" (長脚国 *naga-ashi koku*) as well as several taxonomy systems of animals, plants and birds according to the Chinese model. Its logical presentation, topical divisions and discussion of alternative explanations for the same phenomena, however, anticipated the modern encyclopedia. *Wakan sansai zue* describes and illustrates various activities of daily life, such as carpentry and fishing, as well as plants and animals, and constellations. Reproductions of the *Wakan Sansai Zue* are still in print in Japan.

The second important work to be taken into consideration while regarding the emergence and development of soft power through means of encyclopedic writings is *Kōsei shinpen*, which was translated between 1811 and 1844 by a group of *rangakusha*, that is, representatives of the above-mentioned Dutch studies, *rangaku*. It is a confirmed fact that *Kōsei Shinpen* (freely *Encyclopedia for Household Use*, literally *A New Book of Welfare*) is a translation of the Dutch book *Algemeen Huishoudelijk-, Natuur, Zedekundig- en Konst-Woordenboek* which in its turn is the Dutch translation by Jacques Alexandre Chalmot in 1778, Leyden, of Noel Chomel's *Dictionnaire oeconomique contenant les moyens d'augmenter et conserver son bien et mesme sa santé* (1709). This translation appears as part of the exchange which was at first limited to trade between the closed Japan and the Netherlands and which gradually moved to the exchange of knowledge, as the cargo delivered by Dutch ships and imported by Japanese noblemen or shopkeepers sometimes

included books in Dutch which allowed Japanese intellectuals during the Edo period to learn Western scientific knowledge which were to crystallize precisely into the above mentioned Dutch studies flourishing especially during the reign of the 8th Shogun Tokugawa Yoshimune (1684-1751, reign period 1716-1745). Tokugawa Yoshimune was interested in products from overseas as a means of encouraging new industries and domestic production so that among others in 1720, he relaxed the Book Ban Order to allow the import of non-Christian books and actively promoted the learning of foreign knowledge, such as having intellectual samurai learn the Dutch language. Later on, as advocated by the astronomer Takahashi Kageyasu, the Shogunate government established in 1811 an official translation organization at Tenmondai in which Udagawa Yoan, Baba Sajûrô, Otsuki Gentaku, Aochi Rinso and others served, and among other works translated the Dutch translation of N. M. Chomel's work as the *Kôsei shinpen*.

The title itself, namely *Kôsei shinpen*, reflects the spirit of the time oscillating between Chinese traditional models and Western innovations: *Kôsei* goes back to a line from *Shokyô*, *The Book of Writings*, attributed to Confucius and refers to the construction possibilities of an harmonic life based on Confucianist virtues such as increasing efficiency, responsibility and loyalty as propagated by the official doctrine of the Tokugawa regime. Contrarily, *Shinpen* has a very pragmatic meaning (new book or new edition) and reflects the translators' consciousness of not translating Chomel's original, but a new, revised edition of his work. *Kôsei shinpen* as encyclopedic work is basically a truncated version of Chomel's original, including entries resulting from a very realistic and practical approach. Christian or religious elements are completely deleted, and most included entries refer to such concrete fields as biology, pharmacy, mineralogy, commerce, industry, nutrition or astronomy. Some translated entries are wrong, mainly because of the non-existence of those issues in Japanese context (such as albatross), but remarkable is the effort to cope with unknown matters: translation as a means to cope with the unknown while incorporating it.

The main goal of this huge translation work to last between 1811 and 1845 was precisely the spreading of knowledge among a broader audience and the popularization of scientific information on the West. As at that time, encyclopedia-like works such as guidebooks to which *Kôsei shinpen* belonged existed in the stress ratio between entertainment, education, systematization of existing knowledge and information upon the outside world, *Kôsei shinpen* deals with pragmatic issues while accessing knowledge and accumulating information. It is for sure no coincidence that in the decades to come, the group of translators to tackle the problematics of knowledge in *Kôsei shinpen* will form the core of the intellectuals and technocrats to ground the Imperial University of Tôkyô in 1877 which became in time a light house of humanities research, in Asia as well as worldwide.

The translation process of *Kôsei shinpen* sets a final line to the first step of becoming aware that knowledge is power in the Japanese world. The ideological switch from Chinese models to be accelerated after the First Opium War (1839-1842) marked the increasing consciousness of the Tokugawa regime that the isolation politics couldn't last any longer and the success of the active play on the world stage could only be guaranteed by the profound understanding and coping with the Western powers. Simultaneously, the efforts to systematize and thus to control knowledge – as a means to attain power - increased and would reach a first climax in the forthcoming Meiji period. It was in the first half of its modernity, that is, from the Meiji Restoration in 1868 up to the bitter defeat in 1945, that Japan attempted what one could call a gamble with power: In this period of time, there is a search for identity based on its own historical past, but taking into account the threatening other.

2.2. Gambling with power: modern Japanese encyclopedias until 1945

In this period of time, namely the early 1870s, Japan is troubled by an intensive quest for identity based on its historical past, but taking into account the threatening other. The stylization of the modern Japanese identity draws its roots back into the three slogans of the mid-19th century: At first, identity seems a necessary delimitation of the inner core from the outer space, concretized in the last years of the Tokugawa period in the slogan *sonnô jôi* 尊皇攘夷 – revere the emperor, expel the barbarians. Accordingly, Japanese identity is expressed via deep going clichés – genetics and

milieu as explanations of Japaneseness imply a positive evaluation of the Japanese traditional culture within the framework of a self-structured hierarchy of world cultures. On the other hand, Japanese identity appears as an inevitable absorption of the rejected or restrained other, to lead to a new analysis and regarding of this other during the 1880s in Japan: *bunmei kaika* 文明開化 – „[Western] Civilization and enlightenment. Later on, it will become obvious that rejection and subsequent absorption are two connected processes to activate further interactions and developments, symbolized in the slogan of the 1890s *wakon yōsai* 和魂洋才 – Japanese spirit, Western knowledge/technology: the contemplation of the modern Japaneseness as a re-consideration of the own roots in the context of a global game with possible identities and identifications.

It was mainly due to the [Western] civilization and enlightenment movement during the 1880s that the Westernizer Nishi Amane 西周 (1829-1897) compiled Japan's first modern encyclopedia, the *Hyakugaku renkan* (百学連環). This seminal lecture series was to be published much later, in February 1945, by Ôkubo Toshiaki 大久保利謙 (1900-1995), one of the leading Japanese historians, included in the volumes containing the collected works of Nishi Amane. In *Hyakugaku renkan*, this special series of lectures delivered at Nishi's private academy, the Ikueisha, from late 1870 to early 1873, and using as title the English word *Encyclopedia* and the subtitle *The Chain of Many Sciences* or *The Linked Circle of Hundred Sciences*, Nishi attempted to present systematically the combined knowledge of the West, China and Japan, ordered according to Western categories, particularly patterned upon Auguste Comte's positivism and his "law of three stages" (theological, metaphysical, positive) and his "encyclopedic law" (systematic and hierarchical classification of all sciences). Furthermore, Nishi promoted the teachings of John Stuart Mill, that is, he rejected the deductive method traditionally used by Confucian scholars in favor of the Western inductive logic as a more scientific way of learning. However, in his attempt to transfer knowledge from the West to Japan, Nishi collided with two main problems: firstly, the semiotic means by which to translate meaning from one civilization to another; secondly, the intrinsic relationship between concepts as words and concepts as civilization idiosyncrasies as to be developed later by the Western structuralism. Important terms introduced into Japanese by Nishi as translations of Western concepts such as "literature" *bungaku*, "culture" *bunka*, "aesthetics" *bigaku*, "science" *kagaku*, "art" *bijutsu/geijutsu* etc. are to be used up to the present, while such core notions as "ideology" or "identity" not included in Nishi's efforts but later of utmost importance are used as Japanese transliterations of Western concepts, and not as Japanese concepts to translate Western concepts. Basically, Nishi's efforts to culturally locate the newly opened Japan within the current historical surrounding should be regarded within the general context and efforts to politically-economically integrate Japan into the worldwide system as playing power without the necessity to re-invent or re-structure the existing system. That is, Nishi was aware of the fact that simply internalizing the powerful other doesn't lead to become itself powerful (see the colonies), but one was supposed to take over that powerful other, to adopt its strategies and to play with it on an equal level. Knowledge, more than technology was the main means Nishi saw to acquire this goal. Later on, in his *Hyakuichi-Shinron (New Theory of Hundred and One)*, published in 1874, he went so far as to reject Confucian ethics altogether as no longer appropriate for Japan, but was very careful not to reject Japanese heritage. In *Jinsei Sanpô Setsu (Theory of the Three Human Treasures)* from 1875 he urged all Japanese to seek the goals of health, knowledge and wealth, in place of Confucian subservience and frugality, and in his subsequent lectures to the military, he emphasized Western influenced discipline and obedience over Chinese prescribed seniority and hierarchy. Basically, Nishi's stressing of the importance for a nation to possess its own conceptualized and systematized knowledge discloses his awareness of the function of knowledge for a nation's emancipation from the status of being represented by other nations to the status of itself representing other nations, as Joy Hendry puts it, a process that will reach its end point during the Ôsaka World exhibition in 1970.

However, parallel to Nishi's efforts to import and subsequently to implement Western knowledge as Japanese (modern) knowledge, beginning in 1873, the Ministry of Education sponsored the translation of William and Robert Chambers' *Information for the People* into Japanese under the title *Hyakka Zensho* (百科全書, the "Comprehensive Encyclopedia"), which

was completed in the 1880s. Later, in 1879, the Ministry of Temples and Shrines sponsored the compilation by Nishimura Shigeki (西村茂樹) and others of another encyclopedic work, the *Koji ruien* (古事類苑, literally “Encyclopedia of ancient matters”), which was finally completed in 1914. *Koji ruien* is an encyclopedic work in which premodern written testimonies upon all thinkable disciplines and fields are collected; to produce this work lasted 35 years; its dimensions are impressive, as it contains 60 volumes with several thousand pages. In such a respect, *Koji ruien* is indeed a pioneer accomplishment in the field of encyclopedic genre while providing information in several fields, from astronomy and biology to religion and agriculture.

On its way to define national – political and economic – power in terms of knowledge, the publishing house Sanseidō published its 10-volume encyclopedia, the *Nihon Hyakka Daijiten* (日本百科大辞典, the “Great Japan Encyclopedia”), between 1908 and 1919, and within the myriad of all-encompassing or specialized encyclopedia and encyclopedia-like publications, translations or own compilations, mostly concentrating on daily practices and avoiding abstract teachings in this period, the climax was marked by Heibonsha’s 28-volume work, the *Dai-Hyakka Jiten* (大百科事典, the “Great Encyclopedia”), between 1931 and 1934. It was this encyclopedia the first one to use the characters 事典 (*jiten*) rather than 辞典 (*jiten*) to represent the word “encyclopedia,” starting the convention whereby the first 事典 is used to mean “encyclopedia” and the second 辞典 is used to mean „lexicon“ or “dictionary.” Zensho 全書, on the other hand, with the literal meaning of ‘complete treatise’, as it refers to the first encyclopedia-like work published in Japan, is still used for more ambitious, literature-like works such as the translations of Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*.

Heibonsha’s Great Encyclopedia expresses the awareness of knowledge as control and manipulation instrument to build the new Japan 新日本 *shinnippon* as promoted by a certain stratum of the intellectual elite in Japan of the late 1930s. But, certainly, cracks opened on Japan’s liberal facade. Led by fanatic militarists, Japan’s expansionist adventure on the continent went out of control and reached eventually due to the atom-bombings on Hiroshima and Nagasaki as well as due to Japan’s subsequent unconditional surrender a very sad end. During those dark years, the whole nation became mobilized – including the intellectuals and their works, with an astonishing success. Some of them did really believe in Japan’s role to liberate Asia from Western colonial hegemony, some of them gave in because of fear, opportunism or as a consequence of univoque measures taken by the government such as preventive detention, ban of intellectual activity or social ostracism, while the repentant ones were rewarded with rehabilitation programs and social recognition. The flood of official sanctioned information in wartime-Japan transformed it into an intellectual madhouse.

2.3. Towards a new paradigm of knowledge: Japanese postwar encyclopedias

Incidentally, it was the bitter defeat in the Pacific war to stop the spiral of knowledge and violence in Japan. Recapturing the slogan of the 1890s *wakon yōsai* 和魂洋才 – Japanese spirit, Western knowledge/technology – and conversing it positively, Japan started the third stage of its problematization of knowledge as power: Attempting to reinvent the paradigms of knowledge, it developed into soft power and re-located itself within the international community.³

The decade after the war was a very hard time for the whole Japanese society. Like a phoenix from its own ashes, the Japanese culture revived beyond any expectations. Knowledge became the instrument to prove the new Japanese superiority and developed to a weapon in the context of its pacifism. Up to early 1950s, few encyclopedia and dictionaries dealing with the new era - and the occupation status – appeared; but, as the ‘golden years of the Shōwa thirties’ (1955-1967) meant the emergence of first welfare signs in the Japanese society, the number of published encyclopedia dealing with household-matters and everyday issues or various children's encyclopedia increased.

³株式会社 講談社 (Kōdansha): 学芸局 辞典編集グループ常世田 智 (TOKOYODA Satori); 株式会社 小学館 (Shōgakusan) コミュニケーション編集部 新百科編集 金川 浩 (KANAGAWA Hiroshi); 株式会社 平凡社 (Heibonsha) 斎藤 文雄 (SAITŌ Fumio)

Heibonsha responded to Japan's new internationalization by publishing the *Sekai Dai-Hyakka Jiten* (世界大百科事典, the "Great World Encyclopedia") in 32 volumes, between 1955 and 1959.

The year 1957 was marked by the desire to possess the 'three middle-class treasures' (television set, refrigerator, washing machine) corresponding to the three holy Japanese imperial symbols 三種の神器 *sanshu no jingi* (mirror, diamond and sword). The middle-class ideal – for lifetime employed husbands and professional housewives with the holy task of childcare (サラリーマン・専業主婦型家族 *Sararîman-sengyôshufu-keikazoku*) – developed in the 1960s and reached its climax in the 1970s through inelastic hierarchical corporation relationships, fixed gender patterns and efforts to fulfill the institutional, over-individual roles – what Giddens would call the 'fixed qualities' of the premodern age. The late 1960s and the early 1970s counted in Japan as well as in the West as the epoch of freudomarxism and of the student movements which contained the illusion of freedom as liberation and resistance. Standardization and repression, on one hand, and stability in a continuously changing world, on the other hand, were amplified by the ideology to overrun the West – and it eventually became a kind of globalization made in Japan: People were secure as middle-class Japanese, reaching into their history to find unique resources in a modern world. The bifurcated quality of this world – ideologically split between men and women, between work and home, between work and bars, between disciplined productivity and spontaneous emotion – gave people little latitude for thinking about self-identity.

The world exhibition carrying the motto "Progress and Harmony of Mankind" – regarded by most critics as an arrogant and obtrusive display of Japanese power – took place in the year 1970 in Ôsaka. Such publications as Shôgakukan's 19-volume *Encyclopedia Japonica*, Japan's first full-color reference work, between 1967 and 1972, or *Gurando Gendai Hyakka Jiten* (グランド現代百科事典, the "Great Modern Encyclopedia", 1970-1974), a 21-volume encyclopedia published by Gakushû Kenkyûsha, appear as emblematic for this era described sometimes as 'the miracle sixties': the decade between the Tôkyô Olympics (1964) and the first oil crisis (1973). In 1974 and 1975, a 30-volume Japanese version of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, the *Buritanica Kokusai Hyakka Jiten* (ブリタニカ国際百科事典, the "Britannica International Encyclopedia"), was also published in Japan. In 1977, 講談社大百科事典 Kôdansha's Great Encyclopedia (28 volumes) was published, as a preparation for the lavish encyclopedia publishing entertainment in the 1980s.

The 1980s seem to be a key era in Japan playing a threefold role: firstly, the climax and denouement of previous accumulations; secondly, the silence before the storm; thirdly, the springboard into the 1990s. Two main encyclopedic enterprises started, for sure not coincidentally, in the infamous year 1984. Heibonsha returned with a 16-volume compilation, the *Dai-Hyakka Jiten* (大百科事典, the "Great Encyclopedia", 1984-1988), and Shogakukan began publishing a 25-volume encyclopedia, the *Nihon Dai-Hyakka Zensho* (日本大百科全書, literally, the "Japan Comprehensive Encyclopedia," but officially known by the English title, *Encyclopedia Nipponica*, 1984-1989).

Heibonsha's *World Encyclopedia* (世界大百科事典 *Sekai Dai-hyakka Jiten*, World Comprehensive Encyclopedia) is the first of Japan's two major encyclopedia, published by a publishing house which had put emphasis on encyclopedia since its foundation in 1914. *Heibonsha World Encyclopedia* is widely held to be the most complete and up-to-date encyclopedia in the Japanese language. Currently, *World Encyclopedia* holds three editions: the printed edition, edition on DVD, and the online edition called *Network Encyclopedia Netto de hyakka* ネットで百科. All articles in the *Heibonsha Encyclopedia* are signed by their authors. The encyclopedia does not include a list of reference works used in each article. Articles differ widely in length based on the significance of the topic. The encyclopedia covers a wide variety of topics of both general and specific interest, with particular attention to topics relating to Japan. The 1988 edition features 90,000 entries and includes an index that lists cross-references for approximately 400,000 terms. Beginning with the 1988 edition, the encyclopedia has included an index in Western character sets for more convenient searching of foreign words.

The other of Japan's major encyclopedia is *Encyclopedia Nipponica* (日本大百科全書 *Nihon Dai-Hyakka Zensho*, literally the "Japan Comprehensive Encyclopedia") published by Shogakukan,

available in five formats: traditional book form, CDROM, e-book, Internet, and as an i-Mode service, the last two require payment to use. The first edition of *Encyclopedia Nipponica* included 25 volumes and it was published along five years. *Encyclopedia Nipponica* was intended to describe Japan and the Japanese in depth and at large. After 10 years of preparation, over 130,000 entries and 500,000 indexes were organized in alphabetical order in more than 23,000 pages. The most recent version, 1994, has 26 volumes, including the separate volumes of indexes and an auxiliary. Over 6,000 authorities contributed articles to the *Encyclopedia Nipponica*. The topic ranges from social sciences, natural sciences, humanities and lifestyle, emphasizing the Japanese social climate and culture. It focuses on the local region and its history, holding 3,325 entries of Japanese place names. At the same time, it explains foreign countries, culture, history, and societies, focusing especially on relationships with Japan. The length of the articles varies. Some are only a paragraph, while the others are over two pages. The articles are signed. Over 50,000 clear and beautiful images enable the users to enjoy the encyclopedia and to understand the explanation. In particular, sciences and arts articles contain graphs, charts, maps, earth satellite maps, chronological tables, pictures of the arts, and portraits. In addition to each entry, the encyclopedia contains "collaborations" where several authorities from different academic fields combine their various academic viewpoints. The verb entries are the other feature of *Encyclopedia Nipponica*, which cannot be seen in conventional encyclopedias. They not only explain the simple meaning of verbs but also describe them culturally, socially, and scientifically. For instance, the entry of "walk" explains the ways and the reason for both people and animals to walk and the results of medical experiments on walking.

Though not technically a Japanese encyclopedia because it is not written in Japanese, the Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan is an comprehensive English-language encyclopedia on Japan, first published by Kôdansha in 1983 and supplemented in 1986. Covering a broad range of topics on Japan such as encyclopedia standards on history, literature, art, religion, economy, and geography, it was created by both Japanese (680) and non-Japanese scholars (524) from 27 nations. Japanese scholars produced 40 percent of the text, while foreign scholars wrote the remaining 60 percent; still, Japanese and American scholars wrote the majority of the articles. The articles are unsigned. Many articles are English translations from Japanese encyclopedias. There are more than 11,000 entries covering 37 categories of information; it also contains roughly 1000 illustrations in the form of photographs, maps, diagrams, graphs, charts and tables. In order to accommodate a wide audience, from students to businessmen and diplomats, articles were written with the dual purpose of introducing topics at a level appropriate for a high-school student and provide a good starting point for more advanced students with some knowledge of Japan. While many articles are no more than a paragraph, more general headings such as "History of Japan" have as many as 70,000 words. Many articles are followed by suggestions for further readings in English, Japanese, and occasionally other languages. Japanese names are given in Japanese order (surnames first).

Guided by Emperor Hirohito's death on January 7th, 1989, and by the enormous economic recession in the year 1990, further incidents such as the case of girls serial murder Miyazaki Tsutomu 宮崎勤 (1988-1989), the Great Kansai-Earthquake 阪神大震災 *Hanshin daishinsai* (January 17th, 1995) and the sarin gas attack of the religious sect Aum Shinrikyô オウム真理教 *Ômu shinrikyô* (on march 20th, 1995) in the Tôkyô metro convulsed the Japanese society deeply. These years denote a sensitive change within the Japanese prosperity society. Printed encyclopedias are becoming rare, while digitized encyclopedias are taking the over-hand. Also, the official preoccupation with encyclopedia as media decreases, while its function as message to underline national superiority is stressed. The topics range, exactly as during the first encyclopedia boom in 1960s-1970s, from cuisine to foreign languages, fashion to human rights; in this context, encyclopedias capacity to compress power and knowledge becomes obvious – Japan develops after the economic disenchantment at the beginning of the 1990s into a cultural superpower, not at last because of its enormous reserves of cultural power accumulated along decades of negotiation and confrontation with the outer world. Digital and online encyclopedias: The advent of personal computers and the Internet has brought encyclopedias into the digital age. In addition to the Japanese version of Wikipedia, Japanese Wikipedia, which has about 300,000 articles (as of December 15, 2006), the Encyclopaedia britannica and Microsoft's Encarta both appear on

CDROM in Japanese versions. Even if the word 'encyclopedia' is gladly transferred by publishing houses to works which are not quite fully fulfilling universality requirement, the works bring in from an artistic and contents-connected point of view the profit of an encyclopedia. The research of the late 20th and early 21st century, decided to apply the designation 'encyclopedia' also to works published before 1700 which represent or include all or several knowledge areas. However, these works differ in form and contents much from the modern encyclopedias. Since the digitization and the data processing and data representation era, the term 'encyclopedia' is applied to multimedia reference books as well, which are available in digitized form and can be purchased on-line or on various electronic media. They find their starting point further on in reference entries, but add partial additional organization characteristics.

In this context, there is often the complaint about the disappearance of printed encyclopedia in the age of mass digitalization. One should not forget the frequently questioned triad pluralism, democracy and encyclopedia, where the encyclopedic principle is not the compensation of the decay of a once homogeneous world into digital pluralism, as well as the digital pluralism is not the destruction of the good of yore, but a certain kind of development: a new form of *conditio humana*. It is only a historical fact that in former times the normality – whatever this normality would mean – was in such a way suppressed that enlightenment movements had to break down resistance; it stays as confirmation, not as objection. Change and the perception of the change as crisis are usual reactions to such historical movements; the whole philosophical thinking has emerged and developed ever since as oppositional thinking out of crises from previously unchecked convictions and as a form of staggeringly guessed meaning. Out of these crises, institutions of the education and orientation emerged and developed in their turn, exactly as encyclopedias, until they turn again into crises. As such, the encyclopedia is born within the crisis that it itself is diagnosing. The early encyclopedias followed usually systematic order principles. Solely, the enlightenment encyclopedia turns into for the alphabetical consequence of the *lemmata*. The philosophes attempt to moderate the loss of a leading order by placing in front of the Baconian systematics of the sciences and through sub-divided categories. But there was actually no loss. The alphabetical ordering principle order signals the request for self-thinking and a veto against the authority arrogance, which adheres to the systematics of school philosophy. The user is not limited by the system, but has the freedom to navigate and slalom its way from A to Z. In this perspective, the regret that Hegel's system concept of an 'encyclopedia of the philosophical sciences' to become generally accepted has not survived, is no longer understandable. Hegel's hierarchical model emerges and culminates in a philosophy which crows over as the principle *per se* and refers to all other symbolic forms as subordinate elements.

Should one see in Friedrich Schlegel's thesis that the encyclopedia can absolutely be represented only in fragments the worse alternative? Still, the stronger and from a systemic point of view more modest motives that Diderot exposed offer a more future-oriented perspective than the mono-logical thinking: Actually, an encyclopedia aims off to gain the parts of knowledge scattered everywhere on the earth's surface, to expose the general system of these knowledge to the human beings we live together with, to deliver them to those coming after us, so that the work of the past centuries was not useless for the coming centuries, so that our grandchildren become not only more educated, but at the same time more virtuous and happier, as well; thus, we do not die without having paid our price of humanity to the humankind we belong to. In the succession of the encyclopedic reason, one should remind that the encyclopedic principle was initiated by someone (d'Alembert) who basically disliked systems. Encyclopedias are symbols of a developed scientific co-operation and symbol of unity feeling between sciences and scientists, the fraternity between the new encyclopédistes. [...] Such an encyclopedia, which plans a pointing out of gaps and opposite points of view and which stresses the incompleteness of our knowledge, is meant particularly for people to face their own process of growth and spiritual development.

3. Conclusion: knowledge as power – beyond anthropological worry

Turning back to Mr Saitô Fumio, born in 1945 in Tôkyô and a biology graduate from University of Tôkyô in 1968, who helped me extensively during my fieldwork, here are his words:

„Encyclopedias are basically right-oriented, conservative publications. I myself, I am one of the most left-oriented persons in the Heibonsha corporation – and still, in my private circle, I am regarded as extremely conservative. I think, that’s where the power and the political usability of encyclopedias rests. As tangible monuments of knowledge, they shape the ideals of their readers and control [subliminally] their achievements, still, without directly or openly mirroring the newest historical developments. I think, that’s why the editing and selling of encyclopedias was a resplendent business for decades, from the 1960s until the 1980s – an absolute successful story for publishing houses on an economic level. Encyclopedias are creating and establishing social cohesion and ideological confirmation. Due to the emergence of digital encyclopedias and of the internet, the classical paper encyclopedias lost their almighty authority. Though, the new information media cannot take over the function of the old, traditional encyclopedias, not only as containers of knowledge, but as mediators of social significance. I think, that’s the main problem of the Japanese society nowadays. It has been flooded by a huge wave of new media which dissolved the old one without being able to completely replace them with a comparable powerful message. That’s why I militate for the perpetuation of the printed paper encyclopedias.”

The philosophy, which understands itself as encyclopedic, does not decree what is to be considered true. It is an offer, a thinking means, a possibility, of orienting itself in the knowledge and by knowledge. The encyclopedia is one of the cultural forms, in which under the conditions of the pluralism possible worlds co-exist; the apparently chaotic variety is brought into a unit, which is not controlled by the one. In exactly this form the encyclopedia becomes useful. Differently than the Babylonian large library, whose knowledge supply remains for the individuals usually virtual, the encyclopedia offers world versions for exactly the knowledge, which individuals can appropriate. It contributes to repair at least three lacks which are specific to humans. The first lack is an inability to suppress the space: Humans live in the area of a culture, even if in it several cultures overlap. Transculturality exceeds the individual, and interculturality is not a fact, but a standard. There is not only one culture. The philosophical thinking informing the encyclopedia corresponds to the attitude that it is more justified and more meaningful to accept heterogeneity and diversity in the world than to defend the homogeneity of a world maintained through religious, philosophical and political monisms and which is governed by principles. From this follows the criticism of stories in which cultures see their origins and in whose horizons they see their futures. The encyclopedia offers a form in which an epistemic democracy corresponds to the plurality of the ethical-political ways of lives of humans, strong enough to face criticism from hegemonic dogma tables of the requirements of individual knowledge cultures. The second lack bases in the finiteness of human life: There are borders of knowledge; we never know everything that would be possible to know; we never know enough, in order to be able to consider ourselves judicious in all affairs interesting us. Nobody knows the whole of the natural and historical world in its parts. Like that it is also with the territories of the knowledge cultures. The encyclopedia is a good form of a not uninterested, but interested coexistence of the different realization and knowledge ways.

The third lack is an inability in time: Without auxiliary means of remembrance there is nothing to learn out of the past: encyclopedia works as a kind of long-term memory. We are not coming from nowhere. An encyclopedic philosophy charges for this when it keeps alive and-or makes alive the features of the reality in its historical origin, existence and possible future. What is specific for philosophy? The answer which claims philosophy is the science of the general, is nonsensical: there is no such argument. The discourse of the abstract general reaches only specialists of academic philosophy, while plain people are generally interested in the individual and special. As well, the ‘totalising’ thinking way, which is often attributed to the philosophical thinking as its characteristic feature, is a dead end; ‘the whole’ is not a true instance if it exterminates the particular. It is something else to save the diversity of life and of the ways of thinking in the contractions of the encyclopedia in such a way that structure and development of nature, society and knowledge history become reasonable. The encyclopedia summarizes the special, it brings it under a more general name, in which the individual case emerges. It is in this way that it also deals with past knowledge: encyclopedia supports the individuals in their archaeological work on knowledge.

Sugimoto Tsutomu, one of the leading linguists and Japanese language historians, expressed the following thoughts during a long conversation held in Kamakura in March 2010:

“For ages, Japanese intellectuals were aware that – imported or own – systematic knowledge was the foundation of any strong nation, namely in its educational function. From *Wakan sansai zue* to *Kôsei shinpen* and further to modern encyclopedias on the model introduced by Nishi Amane, there was the permanent strive to support the inner coherence of the Japanese archipelago and later of the Japanese nation through a solid education based on knowledge organization and mediation. Encyclopedias were the main tools in this endeavor.”

Japanese encyclopedias outline the dynamics of knowledge and power while managing cultural stability and social cohesion, which lead to economic prosperity and eventually to political hegemony. Nishi's original stressing of the importance for a nation to possess its own conceptualized and systematized knowledge discloses his awareness of the function of knowledge for a nation's emancipation from the status of being represented by other nations to the status of itself representing other nations, as Joy Hendry puts it, a process that will reach its climax during the Ôsaka World exhibition in 1970. Oscillating between original Chinese models and subsequent Western archetypes, along the history, they challenge such asymmetrical notions as identity and alterity through new formulations of ideas flows and their transformational nature: The emergence of knowledge as means of soft power which metamorphoses into real – political as well as economic – power reveals encyclopedic practice in Japan's case as one of the secret weapons in the course of its astonishingly fast modernization and its miraculous postwar resurrection. The strategies employed by Japanese encyclopedia makers to construct a solid ideological background via floating aesthetics migration range from capturing the powerful other and internalizing it while constructing its own identity to implementing the powerful core of the self within the world community. The transition from imagination to ideology and from ethics to aesthetics in encyclopedic practice reflects the transformation of encyclopedias' role from an insignificant socio-cultural medium into a powerful politic-economic message in modern Japan. After the important paradigm shift from Chinese classical models to Western innovative archetypes in the last third of the Tokugawa period, Japan struggled to remain intact, a cultural monolith, in the Asian region while trying to compete with Western power in their own supremacy system. At the turn of the millennium, it would change its definitional strategy from absorbing respectively letting itself being absorbed into a system to challenging the existing system via own development models and plans, all based as in case of Meiji Restoration as well, on technocratic visions. It is to be seen in the future if knowledge as soft power can indeed turn into solid power and lead to supremacy.

Nowadays, it is an open secret that Japan is redefining superpower – though as cultural issue and in terms of cultural hegemony. Japanese encyclopedias appear to be, more than their Western equivalents, containers of knowledge and power; they mediate a certain worldview as common understanding based on flows of information transformed into blocks of knowledge and implemented as such. While dealing with knowledge organization and translation, Japanese encyclopedia construct Japanese identity as stress ratio between dynamics of knowledge and games of power and implement a specific worldview as human experience and progress. Japanese encyclopedias outline the dynamics of knowledge and power as well as the discursive construction of identity with the stress on transculturality and nationality. Oscillating between original Chinese models and subsequent Western archetypes, along the history, they challenge such asymmetrical notions as identity and otherness through new formulations of ideas flows and their transformational nature: The emergence of knowledge as means of soft power which metamorphoses into real – political as well as economic – power reveals encyclopedic practice in Japan's case as one of the secret weapons in the course of its astonishingly fast modernization and its miraculous postwar resurrection. The strategies employed by Japanese encyclopedia makers to construct a solid ideological background via floating aesthetics migration range from capturing the powerful other and internalizing it while constructing its own identity to implementing the powerful core of the self within the world community. In an analogue manner as fugitive information turns to crystalized knowledge, what is to a certain point in time known as culture, identity or art depends on the level of disrupting forces inside or – better said – above the society. The condensation of liquid information into solid knowledge through encyclopedias along its last 300 years from late Tokugawa period up to the climax in the 1970s and early 1980s and the subsequent dissipation of solid knowledge into liquid information coincide with Japan's economic development. Simultaneously, the transition from imagination to ideology and from ethics to aesthetics in

encyclopedic practice reflects the transformation of encyclopedias' role from an insignificant socio-cultural medium into a powerful politic-economic message in modern Japan. After the important paradigm shift from Chinese classical models to Western innovative archetypes in the last third of the Tokugawa period, Japan struggled to remain intact, a cultural monolith, in the Asian region while trying to compete with Western power in their own supremacy system. At the turn of the millennium, it would change its definitional strategy from absorbing respectively letting itself being absorbed into a system to challenging the existing system via own development models and plans, all based as in case of Meiji Restoration as well, on technocratic visions. It is to be seen in the future if knowledge as soft power can indeed turn into solid power and lead to supremacy.

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