CHAPTER 7

Honzōgaku after *Seibutsugaku*: Traditional Pharmacology as Antiquarianism after the Institutionalization of Modern Biology in Early Meiji Japan

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The Meiji Restoration (*Meiji ishin* 明治維新) of 1868 marked the beginning of a process of radical modernization that transformed Japan into a nation-state with vibrant intellectual and scientific communities, a growing capitalist economy, a strong army, and a rich colonial empire. And yet, the events of 1868 were too anticlimactic to be called revolutionary. Life for the majority of the population continued unchanged in the months following the collapse of the Tokugawa *bakufu* 徳川幕府, and the political elites at the local level remained in power as administrators of their lands as before. The Meiji Restoration of 1868 may not qualify to be considered a revolution comparable to the American or the French of the late eighteenth century, but the changes that occurred between the 1850s and the 1880s transformed Japanese society so radically that describing them as revolutionary would not be an exaggeration: a revolution in the *long durée*. The persistence of the trope of "change and continuity" in the historiography of modernizing Japan is evidence of the ostensible contradictions of revolutionary changes after an *un*revolutionary event.

A different approach to the unfolding of the Meiji "revolution" in the second half of the nineteenth century follows the transformation of traditional cultural fields in the early decades of the Meiji period. Many literary and artistic styles and genres, as well as fields of knowledge, disappeared; others changed and adapted under the pressure of new ideas and new forms introduced from the West. In the following pages, I reconstruct the processes through which a field of nature study that developed in the Tokugawa period out of a corpus of Chinese medicinal texts in the Confucian tradition—known under the umbrella term of *honzōgaku* 本草学—was adapted and transformed into the modern fields of biology (*seibutsugaku* 生物学), botany (*shokubutsugaku* 植物学), and zoology (*dōbutsugaku* 動物学) in the 1870s and 1880s.

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In the course of the Tokugawa period, the discipline of *honzōgaku*—literally "the study of the fundamental herbs," a field of pharmacological research ancillary to medical studies—developed into an eclectic field of nature studies that encompassed an array of styles and approaches, from lexicography and encyclopedism to agronomy, aesthetics, gastronomy, and natural history. These *exaptive* transformations resulted from radical shifts in the standards, practices, and socio-professional configurations that characterized the study of the natural world, such that a primarily lexicographic discipline could become an empirical science that was surprisingly easily assimilated into the modern Meiji state in the second half of the nineteenth century.[1] A combination of intellectual, social, political, aesthetic, and economic changes made the new forms of natural knowledge possible: above all, the development of a market economy, improvements in agricultural production, mercantilist policies of shogunal and domainal administrations, and increased exchange of cultural goods across different social classes—an exchange that favored a surge of popular entertainment, refined pastimes, artistic creations, and intellectual discourse related to plants and animals.[2] Concerns with economic necessity and educated entertainment dominated these transformations and contributed to produce a discipline (or, better put, an ensemble of disciplines and practices) that accumulated an impressive load of data on plants and animals, as well as a sophisticated technology of observation, description, reproduction, and manipulation of specimens.

Toward the end of the Tokugawa period, however, the rich diversity of styles, approaches, forms, and ends of Japanese *honzōgaku* gave way to a more integrated discipline, the instrumental value of which was mobilized for the sake of economic growth. Three factors contributed to this process of simplification: deep fractures in the social texture that the monetized and market-oriented economy stimulated; the economic crisis of the 1830s, which called for a complete reformation of both the political sphere and the productive system; and the acceptance of the new Western sciences by a larger number of scholars and naturalists, thanks to the activities of the German physician and

1 "Exaptation" is a term I adopted from evolutionary biology. It was used by Stephen Jay Gould in 1982 to refer to a shift in the function of a trait or feature that was not produced by natural selection for its current use. Perhaps the feature was produced by natural selection for a function other than the one it currently performs and was then co-opted for its current function. For example, feathers might have originally arisen in the context of selection for insulation, and only later were they co-opted for flight. In this case, the general form of feathers is an adaptation for insulation and an exaptation for flight. See Gould and Vrba 1982.

2 Marcon, forthcoming; Nishimura 1999.

botanist Franz von Siebold, surgeon at the Dutch East Indies station of Deshima, in Nagasaki Bay.

After the Tenpō 天保 crisis of the 1830s, the instrumental value of *honzōgaku* for economic growth became a leading impulse for its practices. This transformation in scopes and methods put in motion two distinct but interrelated dynamics. On the one hand, *honzōgaku* became more similar to Western natural history, in particular that brand of naturalistic research sponsored by Linnaeus and his "apostles," which submitted natural knowledge to the necessities of national economic growth.[3] On the other hand, I claim that the fusing of *honzōgaku* and the new field of *keizaigaku* 経済学—a Confucian notion translatable as "ordering the realm and saving the people" that soon transformed into "political economy"—facilitated the conversion of late Tokugawa scholars into modern scientists in the early decades of the Meiji period.[4]

After the defeat of the Tokugawa and their allies in the Boshin War 戊辰戦争 (1868–1869) and the founding of a new political system that restored power to the emperor, Japanese politicians and scholars engaged in a modernization effort that lasted for at least the first three decades of the Meiji period. Amnesia and erasure of the recent Tokugawa past were a vital prerequisite of this endeavor of "civilizing and enlightening" (*bunmei kaika* 文明開化) Japan and the Japanese.[5] At the same time, the manufacturing of its national subjects involved the canonization (which often coincided with its invention) of a "national literature," a "national history," a "national religion," and a "national language."[6]

A different attitude characterized the political, financial, and intellectual endorsement of those disciplines—most importantly, the various scientific disciplines—that were "adopted" from the West and were fundamental for laying the industrial and economic foundations of the new nation-state. James Bartholomew well summarized the dominant attitude of Meiji scholars and statesmen, for whom "[t]he paradigms in effect in the Tokugawa period were all replaced by Western ones, and government policies restricting certain fields did not survive the demise of the shogunate."[7] In actual fact, if we follow the fate of *honzōgaku* in the transition from the Tokugawa to the Meiji period, a more complex and nuanced picture emerges. On the one hand, *honzōgaku* lost its name and transferred to the practitioners of the new scientific fields two

3 Koerner 2001.

4 Fujita 2003.

5 Gluck 1985; Shimane Kenritsu Daigaku Nishi Amane Kenkyūkai 2005; Kōsaka 1999.

6 Narita 2002.

7 Bartholomew 1989, 9.

centuries of knowledge, research, data, images, techniques, attitudes, styles, facilities, expertise, schools, social relations, books, embalmed and dried specimens, and so on. Scholars active in the transitional period of the 1850s to the 1880s were able to translate Western taxonomy and observational procedures into the familiar language of *honzōgaku*, so that the terminology developed in the Tokugawa period was adapted to convey Western concepts. On the other hand, *honzōgaku* became the name—associated with *kanpōyaku* 漢方藥, now referring to *traditional* (Chinese) medicine in antagonistic opposition to Western medicine—of a lost tradition, of a forgotten wisdom, of alternative practices, of a repository of Asian identity.

A glance at the names and biographies of some of the best-known scientists active in the first half of the Meiji period shows that, at least in the natural sciences, the Meiji Restoration brought more continuity than rupture. Mori Risshi 森立之, a physician of the Fukuyama domain 福山藩 and a strong advocate of the restoration of classical Chinese *honzōgaku*, became a high-ranking bureaucrat in the Ministry of Finance (1869) and the Ministry of Education (1871) with responsibility for scientific education.[8] Yamamoto Keigu 山本溪愚, whose father, Yamamoto Bōyō 山本亡羊, was a direct disciple of the famous *honzōgaku* scholar Ono Ranzan 小野蘭山, continued his father's activity in his private school in Osaka and spent his time organizing meetings that were regularly attended by both *honzōgaku* amateurs and Japanese biologists.[9] Ono Motoyoshi 小野職愨, son of Ono Ranzan's nephew Ono Mototaka 小野蕙畝, was another high-ranking bureaucrat in the Ministry of Education.[10] He was responsible, together with Tanaka Yoshio 田中芳男, for the administration and activities of the Office of Natural History, the Hakubutsukyoku 博物局. The office was established in the ninth month of 1871 as a substitute for the shogunal Office of Products (Bussankyoku 物産局) and acted as an interministerial agency connecting the Ministry of Education with the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce and the Home Ministry, coordinating the collaboration of natural scientists with the government. Its first act was the establishment of the Tokyo National Museum of Natural History. Tanaka Yoshio, one of Itō Keisuke's 伊藤圭介 many students, was one of its founders. Tashiro Yasusada 田代安定, a pioneer in the study of East Asian tropical vegetation, received a formal education in *honzōgaku* in the Satsuma domain 薩摩藩 before he became a member of the Office of Natural History at the

8 In Japanese, *kohonzō fukko*. Ueno 1991, 138–144.

9 Ueno 1991, 145–148.

10 Ueno 1991, 148–151. Ono Mototaka was a member of the shogunal Institute of Medicine (Igakukan 医学館).

Ministry of Education after the Restoration.[11] When the University of Tokyo was founded in 1877, of the fifteen tenured professors in the new Department of Science, twelve were foreigners and the remaining three consisted of a professor of botany, Yatabe Ryōkichi 矢田部良吉, a professor of applied mathematics, Kikuchi Dairoku 菊池大麓, and a professor of metallurgy, Imai Iwao 今井巖, all of whom began their education in *honzōgaku* and Neo-Confucian studies in domainal schools and specialized, after 1868, in Western studies with periods of research abroad.

The composition of the early faculty of the science departments of the University of Tokyo reflected, in both style and method, the way science was being studied and taught in the West. Itō Keisuke was the scholar who inspired the first generation of Japanese natural scientists after his employment as adjunct professor shortly after the university was founded. This founding scientific generation included Iijima Isao 飯島魁, son of a retainer of the Hamamatsu domain 浜松藩, who graduated from the University of Tokyo under Itō Keisuke's supervision and became a pioneering zoologist.[12] The same was true for Miyoshi Manabu 三好学, a botanist born in a samurai family of the Noto domain 能登藩.[13] Another notable figure was the botanist Shirai Mitsutarō 白井光太郎, whose graduating dissertation was highly praised by his adviser, Itō Keisuke, and who would become one of the first modern historians of *honzōgaku*.[14]

Both the social origins and the worldviews of Meiji natural scientists were more similar to the ones held by *honzōgaku* scholars before 1868 than the conventional historical narratives suggest. Tokugawa research practices were not abandoned, and the rise of modern natural sciences in Meiji Japan is better described as a slow transformation and adaptation of *honzōgaku* practices and theories to the language, methods, and aims of Western sciences. The classification of plants and animals changed as the scientific taxonomy derived from Linnaeus replaced the divisions established by Li Shizhen's 李時珍 *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 (*Systematic Materia Medica*; *Honzō kōmoku* in Japanese). But the severity of this disruption was mitigated by the use of *honzōgaku* terminology to convey Western-derived biological concepts. For example, the names of the taxonomical divisions of the *Bencao gangmu* were carried over as the names of genera, families, orders, and classes of biological systematics. Chemistry and cellular biology coexisted with natural history (*hakubutsugaku*

11 Ueno 1991, 169–176.

12 Ueno 1991, 180–189.

13 Ueno 1991, 190–196.

14 Ueno 1991, 197.

博物学), which was still concerned with classification and fieldwork activities resembling *honzōgaku* herbalist expeditions.[15]

This uniformity in attitudes was in part the result of the socially homogeneous background of the first Japanese scientists. Like their *honzōgaku* predecessors, they understood natural studies as a form of service for the welfare of the state. The majority of them collaborated with the Office of Natural History either as organizers of science curricula in the new national education system or as consultants in the development of agricultural reform and industrial planning.[16] The activities of Tanaka Yoshio, Itō Keisuke's student both before and after the Meiji Restoration, exemplify the connection between natural history and the government. He was one of the founders of the interministerial Office of Natural History in 1870, of both the Ueno Zoological Garden and the first Museum of Natural History of Japan (1873), and of the Agricultural Association of Great Japan (1881).[17]

Tanaka was a scholar involved in various public activities, but even more research-oriented scientists like Shirai Mitsutarō could not avoid contacts with governmental offices. After his graduation from the Imperial University in 1886, Shirai found employment as lecturer, thanks to Tanaka's recommendation, in the Tokyo School for Agricultural and Forest Studies (Tokyo nōrin gakkō 東京農林学校), administered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce. After the school was annexed to the Imperial University in 1893 as the Department of Agriculture, Shirai became an associate professor there. For the remainder of his career, he was involved in survey programs organized by the Ministry of Agriculture in various regions of the country. He is remembered today as the first historian of Japanese traditional natural history, but also for having authored a number of works on Japanese forests, his favorite being a survey of Japanese trees he entitled *Jumoku wamyō kō* 樹木和名考 (*Reflections on the Japanese Names of Trees*, published posthumously in 1933). This text was conceived and written in perfect *honzōgaku* style—as the title itself suggests.[18] Shirai summarized his decades of field expeditions sponsored by the Ministry of Agriculture, providing a list of the various regional names of each tree and giving information on its utilization in the Tokugawa period and how it could contribute to the economic growth of the nation. The text was

15 Prince Hachisuka Masauji 蜂須賀正氏 continued the tradition of *honzōgaku* patronage by taking part in naturalist expeditions in Africa and Southeast Asian regions, including Taiwan. See Hachisuka 2006; Kagaku 1991.

16 Nishimura 1999, 2:520–527, 544–556.

17 Miller 2013.

18 Shirai 1933.

written in the classical Japanese style used to translate Chinese throughout the Tokugawa period (*kundoku kakikudashi* 訓読書下) and is indistinguishable from an early modern *honzōgaku* text, except for the scientific Latin name attached to each species.

Hence, *honzōgaku*, as a name for natural studies, disappeared in the Meiji period, but in part it survived in form and content under the new rubric of *hakubutsugaku*, "natural history." Tokugawa scholars, called *jusha* 儒者, also disappeared. Yet their successors shared many of their inclinations, not least of which being the call to public service, though they were now known either by their professional titles or generically as *gakusha* 学者 or *shikisha* 識者, simply "scholars," terms that had begun to circulate only toward the end of Tokugawa period, or as *hakase* 博士, "scientists," a term adopted from the old imperial school of the Daigakuryō 大学寮 of seventh-century Japan. Just as the *honzōgaku* spirit survived in modern *hakubutsugaku*, the social role of scholar-officials, of Tokugawa *jusha*, continued to characterize the life of many intellectuals in modern Japan. As Andrew Barshay put it, "the vector of national service was very powerful; thinkers who were internally alienated could often be restored to the national community."[19] Many scientists were enlisted by the Meiji government in the service of modernization and directed their research activity to that purpose. They were now called biologists, botanists, and zoologists, but their scholarly activities resembled those of their Tokugawa predecessors. This passage from *honzōgaku* to *hakubutsugaku*—just like the passage from *jusha* to *gakusha* or *hakase*—in the Meiji period suggests that although the names of the discipline and its practitioners changed, the Tokugawa legacy lived on and informed the modern names of nature.

At the same time and parallel to these developments, *honzōgaku* kept its name in explicitly antagonistic opposition to the modernization of medicine. This meant opposition to rapid institutional changes that privileged Western medicine and marginalized traditional medicine, as well as opposition to the rapid disavowal of the intellectual legacies of the Tokugawa period upon which *honzōgaku* was founded.

To understand the dynamic of the survival of the term *honzōgaku* when associated with traditional medicine, it is first of all worth briefly sketching the development of medical-training institutions in nineteenth-century Japan. In 1858 the private school Shutōsho 種痘所 was founded in Edo to cure smallpox and was modeled upon the Nagasaki 長崎 clinic run by Otto Gottlieb Mohnike since 1849. Two years later, in 1860, the Shutōsho merged with the educational facilities of the shogunate and, together with the Institute of Medicine

19 Barshay 2004, 241. See also Gluck 1985.

(Igakukan), became the central institution for the study of Western medicine, under the name of the School of Medicine (Igakkō 医学校, 1863). After the Meiji Restoration, the School of Medicine was united in a sort of corporation with the former Hayashi 林 school of Zhu Xi studies 朱子学 (the Shōheikō 昌平校) and with the shogunal professional school, Kaiseigakkō 開成学校, and beginning in 1869 they became known, respectively, as University Eastern School (Daigaku tōkō 大学東校), University (Daigaku 大学), and University Southern School (Daigaku nankō 大学南校). The University Eastern School, at first under the supervision of the British physician William Willis, since its beginning had strong ties with the Military Hospital of Yokohama 横浜. In 1871 the German physicians Leopold Müller and Theodor Hoffmann became the leading instructors at the school. In 1874 it was renamed Tokyo Medical School (Tokyo Igakkō) and became the main medical-training center in early Meiji Japan: the majority of the first generation of its Japanese students were physicians formerly educated in Chinese medicine. From 1872 to 1875 the faculty of the Tokyo Medical School expanded to include the German physicians von Baelz, Niewerth, Martin, Langgaard, Korschelt, and Hansen in order to cope with the growing number of enrolling students.

It was in the context of this rapid development of a modern Japanese field of Western medicine that the activities of Asada Sōhaku 浅田宗伯 (1815–1894), physician of traditional Chinese medicine, became renowned in the modern city of Tokyo. A former student of Rai San'yō 頼山陽, Asada had studied Chinese medicine with Taki Motokata 多紀元堅, Kojima Naokata 小島尚質, and Kitamura Naohiro 喜田村直寛, all physicians of the shogunal Institute of Medicine. Today, Asada Sōhaku is probably most remembered as the inventor of the recipe for the Asada *ame* 浅田飴, better known as *nodoame* 喉飴, candies that help to alleviate the symptoms of sore throats that we can still buy in every convenience store in Japan. But in the early Meiji period, in the context of rapid Westernization and modernization, Asada was a living relic of a disappearing world or, better put, a world in the process of being disavowed and erased. Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石, in his 1906 *Wagahai wa neko dearu* 我が輩は猫である (*I Am A Cat*), has offered a revealing portrait of Asada:

> Now, there flourished in the days of my master's childhood a certain noted physician of Chinese medicine, Asada Sōhaku, who lived in Ushigome. When that old man went out upon his rounds, he invariably traveled, very, very slowly, in a palanquin. As soon as he was dead, and his adopted son had taken over the practice, the palanquin was put away in favor of a rickshaw. No doubt in time's due course the adopted son's

> adopted son will put away the invariable herb tea of his predecessors and start prescribing aspirin; however, even in the first Sōhaku's heyday, it was regarded as shabbily old-fashioned to be troudled through the streets of Tokyo in a palanquin. Only long established ghosts, dead pigs on their way to freight yards, and, of course, Sōhaku's doddering self saw nothing unpresentable about it.[20]

Asada, this "shabbily old-fashioned" physician of *kanpōyaku*, must have appeared as an anachronistic presence in a rapidly modernizing Japan. Nonetheless, he acquired notoriety after curing—thanks to his "archaic" techniques and knowledge, relics of a feudal past his contemporaries were eager to forget—the French ambassador Michel Jules Marie Léon Roches, as well as, rumor had it, Prince Yoshihito 嘉仁 (later to be known as Emperor Taishō 大正天皇). In his 1885 "Notes on the History of Medical Progress in Japan," Willis Norton Whitney reported that Asada, a "physician of the Old, or Chinese School, who follows religiously the teachings of the ancients," and since 1861 personal physician of the shogun, in 1865 was called to the shogunal castle to look at "the French Minister Roches, who had suffered from a disease which had for a number of years baffled all medical skill." Only Asada "succeeded in restoring him to health."[21]

Asada's medical successes were widely publicized at the time, often in open polemic against the *bakufu*'s and, later, the Meiji government's unconditional support of Western medicine. Whitney noted that Asada was like all "*Kuwampō-no-isha*, or Chinese educated physicians, as they are called, [who] always dispense their own medicines, which consist for the most part of herbs, and a few mineral substances, as mercury and lime." Throughout his long essay, Whitney severely criticized both the efficacy and the powerful aura of mystery that surrounded these "Chinese educated physicians." He noted, however, with undisguised relief, that "although, among the most conservative of the higher classes, as well as among the lower and ignorant classes, the Chinese physicians are still very popular, the superiority of Western medicine is rapidly becoming apparent to all."[22]

Kanpōyaku physicians were certainly the first to note the increasing support and institutional success of Western medicine—which included substantial financial support from the state. It was to oppose this trend that Asada and other traditional physicians founded the Onchisha 温知社 (Society for the

20 Natsume 2001, 420.

21 Whitney 1885, 387.

22 Whitney 1885, 388.

Revival of Wisdom) in 1879, a society for the support of *kanpōyaku*, whose efforts included the foundation of schools in the various prefectures to preserve this medical profession. Most importantly, the Onchisha and its members appealed on various occasions to the government and the Imperial Assembly (Teikoku gikai 帝国議会). The survival of *kanpōyaku* was put in jeopardy in 1879, however, when a system of state examinations for the certification and licensing of physicians trained in state institutions was put into place. Now the medical profession required training in biology, chemistry, anatomy, physics, surgery, diagnostics, pharmacognosy, ophthalmology, etc. This system prohibited de jure and de facto all physicians trained in *kanpōyaku* from practicing medicine, placing them into an uncertain and contradictory legal status whereby it was not clear whether they would be allowed to continue to treat patients or not.

In 1891 a petition signed by 1,984 *kanpōyaku* physicians and 51,050 citizens was sent to the new Imperial Diet to plead for recognition of *kanpōyaku* training and for authorization to practice. The petition was rejected, but it stirred quite a debate among intellectuals and opinion makers over the value of *kanpōyaku* as a diagnostic and treatment technique that soon expanded into a debate over the moral legacy of traditional culture.

It is important to remember that the political and ideological context dramatically changed after the first two decades of the Meiji period. Between 1887 and 1897 the anxious impulse to modernize, Westernize, and repudiate the "feudal" past—the persistent leitmotiv of the Civilization and Enlightenment Movement—had begun to wither away, and in its place a new self-conscious national ideology emerged that was able to accommodate the ideas and practices of instrumental rationality and technological innovation alongside the preservation of a national essence. *Kokutai* 国体—or "national essence," a term imbued with Confucian overtones that was resuscitated from the polemical pamphlets of late Tokugawa political discourse—now became the central keyword of the Imperial Rescript on Education that all schoolchildren had to memorize and religiously recite at the beginning of every school day. This accommodation resulted in a communion of technological advancement and traditional ethics that brought back to life the once anachronistic Tokugawa Confucian legacy.

It is therefore not surprising that the 1891 appeal to the Imperial Diet by *kanpōyaku* physicians was able to mobilize more than fifty thousand supporters among intellectuals, artists, members of the imperial nobility and the high bourgeoisie, and the like. Japan had now achieved a degree of industrial and technological advancement—soon to be proved in the military field against China and Russia for supremacy over East Asia—that no longer necessitated

an open disavowal of its "feudal" and "backward" past. The "escape from Asia" (*datsu-A ron* 脱亜論) that inflamed the columns of the newspapers in 1885 had already acquired a different meaning by the 1890s: Japan was ready, on the one hand, to reconcile scientific, industrial, and political modernization with a "national essence" that was now believed to have been slowly precipitated in the Tokugawa ideologico-cultural centrifuge; and it was ready, on the other hand, to lead the awakening of the entirety of East Asia to the necessities of the modern world, a colonial enterprise that the war with China would soon make explicit.[23]

Physicians trained in Western medicine must have felt this change of mood and have believed their authority to be under threat. In 1892 a delegation of modern physicians petitioned the Diet to prohibit once and for all the practice of *kanpōyaku*. The battle for political legitimation continued until 1895, when the Diet established (105 votes against 78) that *kanpōyaku* should not be granted equal status with modern medicine nor should the state legitimate or support *kanpōyaku* as a social service. However, its practice was not outlawed, prohibited, or subjected to control or limitations. It could be privately practiced, and if a certified physician—that is, a physician who had passed the state examination—decided to try a *kanpōyaku* treatment on a patient, then he was legally authorized to do so with the financial support of the state.

At the same time, in the field of *honzōgaku*, Mori Risshi 森立之 (1807–1885), better known by his intellectual pseudonym of Kien 枳園, promoted a revival of old-style *honzōgaku* precisely when the majority of Japanese botanists were translating their traditional knowledge into the language of Western biology. He rejected Li Shizhen's *Bencao gangmu*, which, according to Mori, had abandoned the traditional dialectical conception of medicinal substances as being both therapeutic and poisonous and also had privileged the classification of natural species according to their medicinal effects, that is, had emphasized subjective effects over objects. Mori dedicated his life to the philological recovery of the forms and meanings of the ancient *bencao* tradition. In a quest to reconstruct the lost *Divine Husbandman's Materia Medica* (*Shennong bencao jing*), a text probably compiled around the second and first centuries BCE and now lost), Mori studied Tao Hongjing's 陶弘景 *Bencao jing jizhu* 本草経集注 (*Notes on the Canon of Materia Medica*, ca. 492 CE) along with *Xinxiu bencao* 新修本草 (*Revised Materia Medica*) and Japanese classics of the Heian period like Fukane Sukehito's 深根輔仁 *Honzō wamyō* 本草和名 (*Materia Medica in Japanese*), Minamoto no Shitagō's 源順 *Wamyō ruijushō* 和名類聚抄 (*Thematic Dictionary of Japanese Terms*), and Tanba no Yasuyori's 丹波康頼 *Ishinpō*

23 Okakura 1905

医心方 (*Essential Medical Prescriptions*). Mori's initiative was not merely philological nor was it motivated by a vain nostalgia for the past: not only did he want to restore the tripartite division of "princely," "ministerial," and "adjutant" drugs to the actual practice of traditional apothecaries and *kanpōyaku* physicians, but he also conceived of his work in open polemic against the modernizing fury of early Meiji Japan, so keen to reject its past.

Three points of interest can be highlighted in the double story of how in the early Meiji period *honzōgaku* both lost its name while keeping its cognitive content and kept its name while disavowing two centuries of Tokugawa research. First, juxtaposed to the intense enthusiasm for modernization and Westernization in the first two decades of the Meiji period, the lives and works of Asada Sōhaku and Mori Risshi testified to a resistance to change that has hardly found mention in the narratives of Japanese modernization. I see their marginalization in the mainstream historiography of science as a sign of the ideological ambivalence of the Meiji period itself, caught as it was in an aporia between modernization/Westernization and the construction of a national identity. It seems to me that Asada and Mori distinguished themselves by their estrangement from this dialectic, as they did not substantially contribute to either one of these two processes and yet in part captured the difficult relation of Meiji intellectuals with their immediate past. On the one hand, as admirers and preservers of an idealized past, they stood for what Nietzsche called the "antiquarian" method of history writing. Nietzsche saw history as being deprived of any inherent meaning in itself and therefore as being constantly ascribed meaning and therefore continuously transformed in an incessant process of interpretation and reinterpretation. The "restricted field of vision" of antiquarian historians causes them to "assign to the things of the past no difference in value and proportion which would distinguish things from each other fairly, but measure things by the proportions of the antiquarian individual or people looking back into the past." Asada and Mori pledged their fidelity to a discipline, a type of knowledge, a technology, and the worldviews attached to it precisely when they were threatening to vanish. In a sense, Asada and Mori both lived in the past, as Natsume Sōseki perceptively ironized, as antiquarians in Nietzsche's sense. Because of their strong commitment to an orthodox version of their vanishing disciplines, both of them failed to productively engage with the contemporary intellectual discourse. On the contrary, they made their estrangement from it a fundamental characteristic of their own intellectual production and professional activities. As Nietzsche put it, they were able to preserve life but were not able to generate new life: "When the sense of a people is hardened like this, when history serves the life of the past in such a way that it buries further living, especially higher living, when

the historical sense no longer conserves life, but mummifies it, then the tree dies unnaturally, from the top gradually down to the roots, and at last even the roots are generally destroyed. Antiquarian history itself degenerates in that moment when it no longer inspires and fills with enthusiasm the fresh life of the present."[24]

And yet—and this is my second point—the struggle of Asada and Mori did acquire some resonance precisely at the moment when the modernizing impulse of Meiji Japan was giving way to an identitarian discourse centered on the emperor, the national essence, and the construction of a Japanese empire in East Asia. That is, their legal struggle for recognition and legitimation in the 1890s enjoyed a certain visibility because of the change in the ideological strategy of imperial Japan. However, that notoriety—this is my third and last point—ensued independently from what they were defending of *kanpōyaku* and old-style *honzōgaku.* Indeed, I think that neither Asada's nor Mori's antiquarianism had anything to do with identitarian constructions or nationalistic views. Quite the opposite: they defended a typically early modern East Asian cosmopolitanism—a belief in the Sinocentric cultural and intellectual sphere that deeply characterized early modern thought, especially in Japan—that was completely at odds with concepts like national essence (*kokutai*), escape from Asia (*datsu-A ron*), and a darkened, feudal, and backward early modern East Asia that characterized the writings of the thinkers of the Civilization and Enlightenment Movement.

Returning to an original *honzōgaku*, just like preserving the ancient techniques of traditional Chinese medicine (*kanpōyaku*), meant defending and preserving a sense of cultural unity that resisted the language of culturalism and national essentialism of modernity. Antiquarians in a Nietzschean sense, Asada and Mori were indeed surviving relics of a time far past. But it was precisely for that reason that they could be mobilized, in the context of "overcoming modernity," in the early twentieth century, as symbols of a past that was worth protecting in order to recover the possibility of an alternative modernity, a modernity other than, and in opposition to, the West.

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