

**BUCHAREST**  
**NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF ARTS**

**A CENTURY OF ROMANIAN COLLECTING**  
**OF FAR EASTERN ART**

**Contributions to the history of *Romanian Japonisme***

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## Foreword

This research addresses a lesser-known aspect of Romanian cultural history regarding the collecting of Far Eastern art, between 1870 and 1970, on the territory of the Kingdom of Romania. We will try to prove the existence of a real passion for art objects of this type, over more than a century, surmounting the mania of Japonisme. By analyzing the characteristics of this process, we will determine its national specificity and analyze it in the European context, comparing it with the situation at the time, both in the Western world, especially the French one - where it was taken from - and other Eastern European countries, to determine the significance of this phenomenon, usually considered minor for the evolution of the Romanian society at the beginning on its road to modernization. We will also prove and define the existence of a new phenomenon noticed by us in Romanian culture - namely the *Romanian Japonisme*.

The passion for this subject was born more than a decade ago due to the interest aroused by the story of a collection of Far Eastern art and the desire to find out the special and publicly unknown destiny of the owner of this collection - General Gheorghe Băgulescu. Thus, after completing his bachelor's degree at the Faculty of History and Theory of Art, the subject of the bachelor's thesis<sup>1</sup> naturally referred to this collection and its significance for the Romanian world, given the identification, at the same time, of the existence of several passionate collectors who gathered significant collections - primarily of Japanese wood carving, which confirms the existence of a taste for the Far East in that era. I sketched the portrait of the collector of such art objects, closely related to the world of the Romanian elite, of the aristocrats connected to the Parisian environment. As a natural consequence, there was a need to develop the subject, involving the tangents of the Romanian world with Japanese, which is why I considered it necessary to deepen the study of this topic during master's studies<sup>2</sup>. During the study work, we came to identify a Romanian universe of Far Eastern art enthusiasts, which explains the presence of art objects of this kind in numerous private collections, donated

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<sup>1</sup> The Bachelor's Thesis titled „The Phenomenon of Romanian Collectionism of Far Eastern Art – The Case of General Gheorghe Băgulescu”, scientific coordinator Conf. Dr. Ioana Beldiman, was presented in session June 2015 and it received mark 10.

<sup>2</sup> The master's dissertation titled “Contributions to the history of Romanian collecting of Far Eastern art”, scientific coordinator Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ioana Beldiman was held in the September 2017 session and and it received mark 10.

to the state over time. We also discovered in this field several types of collectors (amateurs/collectors/connoisseurs) little known outside the elitist circles of those times, but whose passion deserves to be brought back to the light, and this is another goal of our work.

During the master research, we also found the existence of some influences of Japonisme, taken mainly from the French pathway, on the Romanian fine arts, mostly on painting. Researching the literature, we noticed the almost complete absence<sup>33</sup> of studies related to this topic. Thus, at that time, the conclusion was the existence of a determinism between Japonisme and the attraction of Romanian collectors towards Far Eastern art, as a mark of a phenomenon of taking over, through mimicry, from French culture. It is a symptom of both the attempt to align the Romanian culture to the western context and of the delay of this Europeanization. The deepening of this aspect, and the attempt to understand its meaning brought along the desire to carry out this doctoral study.

The research initially started<sup>4</sup> as a work in the field of the history of Romanian art collecting, as we mentioned, a subject little studied at present. At the academic level there are a small number of works dedicated strictly to this field – which in academia everywhere is a sphere of common interest in art history and intensively researched museology). The deepening of the research and the attempt to interpret the data obtained through in the light of modern cultural theories determined the extension of the field of interest that became a subject of study of cultural history.

The beginning of the study of this problematic brought with its aspects, initially unsuspected, related both to the lack of research in this field and to its temporary extension that exceeded the limits of the influence of Japonisme. New data on the role and importance of royal collecting in this context, as well as a whole universe of amateurs and collectors of Far Eastern art in complicated interdependence relations, gave rise to a new working hypothesis that contradicts the existing perception of sporadic interest and on different levels of interest of Romanians in Far Eastern art.

Thus, in our understanding that we wanted to argue throughout the paper, we consider that this interest had been present since the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, manifested by the attraction to

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<sup>3</sup> Among the exceptions we can note the few opinions regarding the influence of Japonisme on Romanian graphics in Amelia Pavel's work, "Desenul românesc în prima jumătate a secolului XX", Editura Meridiane, 1984, Bucharest, p. 52, and Ioana Vlasiu's study "Grigorescu japonizant?", conference text presented at the Colloquium *Nicolae Grigorescu and Modernity*, organized by the "George Oprescu" Institute of Art History, Bucharest, May 2007.

<sup>4</sup> The initial title of the study proposed for doctoral research was "Romanian collecting of Far Eastern art in the interwar period"

*chinoiserie*<sup>5</sup>, especially in areas of Russian and Austro-Hungarian influence. The first part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in Transylvania, showed a prominent interest in ethnography, of which the Romanians in the Principalities became aware through the first travelers. Among them, Dinicu Golescu would tell in his travel notes<sup>6</sup> about the collection of paintings of Baron Samuel von Brukenthal, a fact still unseen at that time in his country. This opening for the Far East of the Transylvanians will later play a significant role in how the citizens of the Kingdom took over this taste, once the new Romanian Kingdom was established and the exodus of many artists and intellectuals began, driven to the motherland by the thought of national unity. A striking example in this regard is the photographer and painter Carol Popp de Szathmári. We must also mention here the possible Russian influence<sup>7</sup> on the taste of Moldavians for *chinoiserie* decorations, as attested by the Chinese room commissioned by Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza in Paris, through the Ambassador of the Romanian Principalities, Vasile Alecsandri.

With the emergence of the royal family, the issue of interest in the Far East gains weight, and there are several levels of interest. Thus Carol I and Queen Elizabeth presented a real attraction to Orientalism<sup>8</sup>, both politically and culturally (literary, philosophically, and artistically). In fact, Carol I was, through the culture and the documented way of acquisition, one of the first collectors in the true sense of the word, knowing the aesthetic value and the origin of the collected objects. This is the beginning of the specific interest in Romanian society, initially at the level of elites (for Far Eastern art), the royal collecting working on many as an impetus, and an example to follow. It coincided with the emergence of Japonisme at the European level, which, as Gabriel P. Weisberg<sup>9</sup> said, changed from a whim into a cult, becoming a mania (japanmania) to integrate in the end into Western art and design. The participation of the Romanian Principalities in the first Universal Exhibitions<sup>10</sup> in which Japan

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<sup>5</sup> The term *chinoiserie* refers to Western imitations of Chinese scenery, more fanciful than exact, often used to give an exotic note to a basic European interior, in an attempt to invoke the exotic aura of the Orient.

<sup>6</sup> Dinicu Golescu, „Însemnare a călătoriei mele, Constandin Radovici din Golești, făcută în anul 1824, 1825, 1828”, Buda, 1826; edition coordinator and afterword Mircea Iorgulescu, Bucharest, 1977.

<sup>7</sup> As Lucian Boia mentions in his most recent book “Romanians and Europe” (Editura Humanitas, 2020), Romanians are characterized by a rapid takeover of various influences - thus changing the Eastern with the European, which began with the Russian occupation (1806 - 1812 and 1829 -1834) was also done through the elites.

<sup>8</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the first half, the term *Orientalism* referred mainly to the study of philosophies and linguistics in India, Asia and North Africa, the clear distinction being made only much later.

<sup>9</sup> Gabriel P. Weisberg, „Reflecting on Japonisme: the State of the Discipline in the Visual Arts”, in „Journal of Japonisme” 1 (2016), 3-16, Brill.com/joj.

<sup>10</sup> At the universal exhibitions in Paris in 1867, and in Vienna in 1873, the great revelations were the pavilions of Japan and China and Siam. At the exhibition in Paris, the General Commissioner of the Romanian Principalities was Alexandru Odobescu. On this occasion, the Thesaurus of Pietroasa was exhibited for the first time, and it was a real success, being requested to be exhibited at South Kensington in London until the spring of

made its triumphal entry into the European world has the significance of a direct contact with the birth of this “collective dream of Europe about the Orient.”<sup>11</sup>

Returning to the Romanian society, we note the appearance of significant collections of art objects. Originally, they included archaeological artifacts, numismatic collections; towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, they copied the royal model offered by the founding of the Royal Collection of Paintings and the emergence of fine art collections. In some of them, we were able to identify Far Eastern art objects that, at that time, were perceived rather as decorative objects, a mark of the taste of the time, but very rarely valued as objects of art. Regarding the collected objects, we can say that, to a great extent, they were porcelain and ceramic objects, lacquer objects, pieces of furniture, jade and ivory statuettes, cloisonné, and less metal and silk objects. As for the graphic works, Japanese carvings were definitely preferred over silk paintings or Chinese watercolors, whereas the works in the field of calligraphy were almost totally missing. These art objects came mostly from Japan and China, but also from Tibet, Siam, and rarely from Korea. The lack of specialized expertise, as well as too few means of information, led to the circulation, in the Romanian world, of mainly high-quality handicrafts, usually made after the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, generally produced for the European market, whose value would increase over time. Authentic objects from ancient times (sometimes with optimistic assignment even in the case of respectable collections) are lucky exceptions.

We will make a due mention here; during our research, we never intended to have an approach regarding the expertise of Far Eastern art objects (we leave this to the specialists). Our interest focused on discovering the evidence regarding the Romanians' passion for the art of the Far East and its interpretation in the context of the history of taste towards the Far Eastern art as well as its significance for the Romanian world.

One of the inconveniences we encountered during this study, in addition to the fragility and physical perishability of these objects, was the almost total absence of documents to certify the existence of these art objects that were rarely included in inventories or vintage

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1868. At the exhibition in Vienna in 1873, Romania exhibits again the Thesaurus of Pietroasa, along with paintings by Theodor Aman and objects of Orthodox worship in Romanian churches. This Romanian presence is visited several times by Prince Carol I, together with his wife and Franz Josef and the Archduke of Austria. Romania, not yet independent, had to agree to exhibit under the Ottoman flag.

<sup>11</sup> Edward W. Said, „Orientalism, Conceptiile occidentale despre Orient”, translated by Ana Andreescu, Doina Lică, Timișoara, Amarcord, 2001. This suggestive phrase is the basis of a recent exhibition, due to the high capacity to represent the expectations of the European at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century about the Far East. „Japon rêvé, images du monde flottant”, (L'Atelier des Lumières), Paris, 2010-2020.

images. The rare documentary mentions, as well as the few receipts existing in the archives<sup>12</sup> regarding the purchase of such goods, proved to be even more valuable.

The indisputable evolution of this taste is related, as before mentioned, to the passion the members of the royal family showed for art and the influence of their example on the Romanian cultural and artistic life. Queen Marie of Romania played a key role with her passion for interior decorations that gave rise to a remarkable interest in interior design in the Romanian society. With her, through her countless connections with aristocrats, scientists, diplomats, travelers, artists, the taste for oriental exoticism, whether related to the Near East or the Far East, grew both deeper and more obvious. We also note here the beginning of female art collecting.

The constant support given to artists, as well as their direct contact with the Western world, mainly during study trips (especially to Paris and Munich - important centers of Japonisme), led, over time, to the emergence of influences belonging to this style in the creation of many Romanian artists. Taking a closer look at these influences, manifested mostly in the fields of painting and graphics, and less in sculpture<sup>13</sup>, mainly taken over at the superficial level of Japanese decorative motifs, but with some notable exceptions of the integration of Japanese art principles (possibly in the context of their metabolization by the new European currents: art-nouveau, symbolism, nabis), the existence of a Romanian Japonisme that we tried to define and place in the European context is clear. In the last decade, studies related to Japonisme have focused on two new directions: the study of Japonisme in the early 20th century - manifested mainly in architecture and interior design, and the research on local manifestations of Japonisme. Works on Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Czech Japonisme were published, to which we can refer for the evaluation of the characteristics of Romanian Japonisme.

With the era of a cultural boom manifested under the reign of Carol II, we notice that the Romanian society was progressively attracted to the Far Eastern world. This fact was proven both by numerous travels in these areas and by the growing interest in the culture of these remote spaces, which led to the emergence of significant literature related to distant cultures that gave rise to its reception on various levels of this world. The publications of the time issued a multitude of articles dedicated mainly to the Japanese civilization and culture,

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<sup>12</sup> Mainly: Central National History Archives, Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Archive of the National Museum of Art of Romania.

<sup>13</sup> It should be noted that it did not manifest almost at all in the decorative arts, probably still in its infancy in Romania and deeply dependent on traditional stylistics in the context of creating a national art school and encouraging the national industry.

and we notice numerous exhibitions of Far Eastern art, most of them in Bucharest. There are also art shops that sell Far Eastern art imported from France (and too little directly from the source).

To this context, we can also add the appearance of the great collectors, true connoisseurs who took this field to a higher level, comparable to the European one. We notice the existence of an exceptional collection by its exhaustiveness but also by its role in the studied phenomenon, given the association with the specialized writings regarding the Sino-Japanese art of collector Gheorghe Băgulescu (taking into account the knowledge of the time and the specific vision of the period) and especially with the (failed) attempt to create a museum of Far Eastern art in Bucharest. During the same period, the most important collections of Japanese wood carvings were created (we refer to the collections of Prof. Ioan Cantacuzino and Prof. George Oprescu).

Their role is all the more significant in the context discussed, as the two created around them an important nucleus of doctors and collectors, who were also very interested in Far Eastern art. They were among the few Romanian collectors who have exceeded the level of amateurism, carefully studying the chosen objects, respecting scientific criteria of value and selection. They and their disciples are also responsible for the existence of the “Toma Stelian” Museum that hosted the first permanent exhibition of Far Eastern art in Romania and numerous temporary exhibitions dedicated to objects of this type from Romanian private collections. Fortunately, the collection of the “Toma Stelian” Museum is today part of the patrimony of the Gallery of Far Eastern Art, and the donation of prints from Academician Gheorghe Oprescu enriches the patrimony of the Stamps Section of the Romanian Academy Library, the depository of an incomparable treasure in this field. Unfortunately, the collection of prints from Professor Ion Cantacuzino left not even tangible proofs of its existence, but only references in the press of the time.

We chose this chronological exposition of the evolution of the studied phenomenon precisely to highlight its continuity in the period 1870-1940, initially studied. The determination of this period was made, as we have shown, starting with the beginnings of a significant phenomenon, with the first documented evidence of the existence of Far Eastern art objects from the collection of Prince Carol exhibited at the *Expozițiunea Amicilor Bellelor Arte*<sup>14</sup> until the phenomenon diminished, at the beginning of World War II. Unlike the Western world, in which Japonisme can be traced temporally until the first decade of the 20th century

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<sup>14</sup> The Exhibition of Society “Amicii Bellelor Arte”, January 1871, at Hotel Herdan.

when it does not disappear but transforms stylistically within the new currents mentioned, in Romania, as in the case of other Eastern European countries, the interest in the Japanese world experienced an intensification with the Russian-Japanese War (1904-1905), as a sign of admiration for the culture and civilization of a people who defeated a great European force. The end of this flourishing interest in the Japanese world comes with the beginning of the Battle of the Pacific (1941-1942), a phenomenon that manifested all across Europe as a perception of a new Japanese reality<sup>15</sup>. It should be emphasized that this period with a maximum blossom of taste for Asian cultures coincided with the evolution of Romanian Japonisme.

The continuation of the research imposed the extension of the studied period until the seventh decade of the last century when, with the issuance of the law of heritage<sup>16</sup> and, later, with the establishment of the Museum of Collections, the phenomenon of art collecting, including Eastern art, diminished significantly. Interestingly, due to the post-war political context in the years of communism, a strange underground art market (talcioac) appeared, through which the Far Eastern decorative objects, both Japanese and Chinese, passed from the aristocratic owners to the possession of the new rulers of that time or of some real art lovers out of whom some were educated in the interwar period and knew how to appreciate them, creating collections in turn. Some of these collections entered the state patrimony through donation, in a strange game of art democratization. We can thus talk about a century of Romanian interest in Far Eastern art.

Regarding the research methodology, we opted, in the first stage, to access the specialized literature to understand the general mechanisms of collecting, starting from the primary texts of the field, such as those of Krzysztof Pomian<sup>17</sup>, Francis Haskell<sup>18</sup>, and Keneth Hudson<sup>19</sup>. To understand the significance of Japonisme, as well as the topicality of some niche

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<sup>15</sup> Japan's transformation was astonishing. From an almost hermetically sealed country for almost 200 years, after the July 1853 visit of Commander Matthew Perry, who returned accompanied by a flotilla in 1854, the opening to the western world of Japan was complete. From a country with a feudal system, the absorption of technology and the latest scientific conquests has transformed it, in less than half a century, into a real economic and military power.

<sup>16</sup> Law Nr. 63/1974 on the protection of the national cultural heritage of the Socialist Republic of Romania.

<sup>17</sup> Krzysztof Pomian, „Collectionneurs, Amateurs et Curieux”, Paris, Venise: XVI-XVIII siècle, Gallimard, Paris, 1987.

<sup>18</sup> Francis Haskell, „La norme et le caprice. Redécouvertes en art”, Paris, 1993; „Patrons and Painters: Art and Society in Baroque Italy”, 1962, 2-nd edition, 1980; „Rediscoveries in Art: Some Aspects of Taste, Fashion, and Collecting in England and France”, 1976.

<sup>19</sup> Keneth Hudson, „O istorie socială a muzeelor”, Bucharest, 1979; „Museums of Influence”, Cambridge University Press, 1987; „Museums: Treasures or Tools?” Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1992; „New Museums in Europe 1977-93”, Massimo Negri (ed.); text by Kenneth Hudson Milan: Mazzotta, 1993.



study topics in this field, the works of Gabriel P. Weisberg<sup>20</sup> and the full reading of the articles in the complete series “Journal of Japonisme” edited since 2016, by Brill Publishing, were of real use; so was browsing through the catalogues of some exhibitions that helped to rewrite and document the history of this subject.<sup>21</sup> Pierre Francastel's study “Japonisme and scenery”<sup>22</sup> was also part of the initial stage of the study for understanding the phenomenon of Japonisme.

In fact, an excellent presentation of the current situation in this field of study can be found in his article “Reflecting on Japonisme: the State of the Discipline in the Visual Arts,”<sup>23</sup> published in the first issue of this journal. To understand the general context and to interpret the phenomenon of Japonisme, we went through works in the field of cultural studies on otherness, Orientalism, cultural geographies. Besides, during the ten years of study, we went through a multitude of articles, reviews, books, catalogs of exhibitions related to these topics (which can be found in the bibliography).

The limited number of sources regarding Romanian collecting made this research more difficult but, at the same time, more challenging. The books of specialists such as Ioan Opriș<sup>24</sup> and Petre Oprea<sup>25</sup> were of real help to draw the general context and the history of this field, as they revealed the first data about the existence of Far Eastern art objects in collections of our country. The books by Ioana Beldiman<sup>26</sup> and Ruxandra Beldiman<sup>27</sup> offered us very

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<sup>20</sup> Gabriel P. Weisberg, „Japonisme: Early Sources and the French Printmaker, 1854-1882”, în *Japonisme, Japanese Influence on French Art 1854-1910*, Weisberg et al., 1975.

<sup>21</sup> As examples, the exhibition *Le Japonisme* at Musee d'Orsay in 1988 and the exhibition *Japonisme, Japanese Influence on French Art 1854-1910* that took place at Cleveland Museum of Art in 1975-1976.

<sup>22</sup> Pierre Francastel, „Impresionismul”, Editura Publishing House, Bucharest, 1977.

<sup>23</sup> Gabriel P. Weisberg, „Reflecting on Japonisme: the State of the Discipline in the Visual Arts”, *Journal of Japonisme 1*, 2016, pp. 3-16, Brill.com/joj.

<sup>24</sup> Ioan Opriș, „Istoria muzeelor din România”, Editura Mouseion, Bucharest, 1994; „Transmuseographia”, Editura Oscar Print, Bucharest, 2000; „Managementul muzeal”, Editura Centrului pentru formare, educație permanentă și management în domeniul culturii, Bucharest, 2000; „Muzee și colecții din România”, Editura Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 2002; „Donații și vechi din București”, Editura Sport-Turism, 1986; „Colecții și colecționari bucureșteni în perioada interbelică”, Editura Tehnică Agricolă, 1994; „Critici de artă în presa bucureșteană a anilor 1931-1937”, Editura Tehnică Agricolă, 1997; „Critici de artă în presa bucureșteană a anilor 1938-1944”, Editura Maiko, Bucharest 1999; „Unele aspecte ale comerțului de artă”, Editura Maiko, Bucharest 2005.

<sup>25</sup> Petre Oprea, „Societăți artistice bucureștene”, Editura Meridiane, 1969; „Scrieri despre arta românească (sec. XIX-XX)”, Editura Litera, 1971; „Colecționari de artă bucureșteni”, Editura Meridiane, 1976; „Consemnări despre arta românească”, Editura Litera, 1978; „Cronicari și critici de artă plastică în presa bucureșteană din secolul al XIX-lea”, Editura Litera, 1980; „Cronicari și critici de artă în presa bucureșteană din primul deceniu al secolului XX”, Editura Litera, 1982; „Itinerar inedit prin case vechi din București”, Editura Sport-Turism, 1986; „Colecții și colecționari bucureșteni în perioada interbelică”, Editura Tehnică Agricolă, 1994; „Critici de artă în presa bucureșteană a anilor 1931-1937”, Editura Tehnică Agricolă, 1997; „Critici de artă în presa bucureșteană a anilor 1938-1944”, Editura Maiko, Bucharest 1999; „Unele aspecte ale comerțului de artă”, Editura Maiko, Bucharest 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Ioana Beldiman, „Sculptura franceză în România (1848-1931)”, Ed.Simetria, Bucharest, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> Ruxanda Beldiman, „Castelul Peleş. Expresie a fenomenului istoric de influență germană”, Editura Simetria, Bucharest, 2011.

argued and subtle explanations of the phenomenon of collecting, of the issue related to donations and donors, and the history of the royal art collection.

Moreover, we must emphasize the role of Prof. Ioana Beldiman, who guided our steps towards the field of the history of Romanian art collecting, leading the bachelor thesis and the master dissertation. We also read the articles about private and particular collections issued in the press over time, especially the specialized one: *Revista Muzeelor, Revue Roumaine d'Histoire de l'Art. Série Beaux-Arts, Studii și Cercetări de Istoria Artei. Artă plastică*.

An important source of documentation was the biographical and memorial literature, along with a multitude of works related to the researched period to identify significant data for our study.

The study of the archives to discover various documents related to donations, as well as museum inventories to find works, was a significant part of our study. These fragments of history accumulated over time often created multiple connections, amplifying the subject. Thus, after years of study, we managed through them to restore a suggestive image of the situation of the Romanian collector of Far Eastern art. We integrated this image into the Romanian cultural landscape, in an attempt to understand it in the spirit of the time, later interpreted in the light of current theories, to situate the level of significance in the European conjuncture of the researched topic.

A special place, both in gathering information for our work and in the stage of its conceptual elaboration, was taken by the discussions with the specialists in the field, whom we thank this way as well. We had the honor and joy to collaborate with renowned professionals in the field of museology and collecting from the main universities in Bucharest, where art history studies are taught: UNArte and the University of Bucharest, the Faculty of History; experts in Far Eastern art, museographers, and curators in the museums that exhibit collections comprising objects of Far Eastern art objects (National Museum of Art, Museum of Collections, Peles National Museum, Cotroceni National Museum, Bucharest Museum, as well as the Romanian Academy and the Academy Library and many house museums throughout the country). Last but not least, the discussions with today's collectors were of real use to us to understand the mechanisms of specific Far Eastern collecting because the phenomenon studied passed the test of time, currently experiencing a new impetus. One of the purposes of our work was to highlight and bring back in the collective memory some personalities unjustly forgotten or whose collecting activity is too little discussed. Thus, I had the opportunity to meet with the members of the Băgulescu and Cantacuzino families, whom I thank for the documents, the

entrusted images, and for the shared memories, as well as the joy of discovering new archives at the Cantacuzino Institute.

An important means to contextualize and assess the discussed phenomenon was the participation in the exhibitions, unfortunately temporary, organized at MNAR, the Museum of Collections, the Museum of Maps, the Academy Library, and the Artmark Auction House, as well as their conferences and symposia on Japanese culture and civilization organized during the years of study by the University of Bucharest.

We sincerely hope that our work, meant to prove the existence of the Far Eastern art collecting phenomenon in our country, with its specificities, during more than a century (as will be discussed in the conclusions of this study) will be an argument in favor of the need for such a permanent exhibition or even a dedicated museum, as we can find in much of Europe (including almost all the capitals of Eastern European countries).

Other important roles in the evolution of our work were played by the communications made during the doctoral research on the occasion of the Symposium of Art and Art History 2nd Edition, October 4-5, 2018<sup>28</sup>, and 3rd Edition, October 25, 2019<sup>29</sup>, Bucharest; The Romanian Art History Symposium “Petre Oprea,” June 27 - 28 2019<sup>30</sup>, and the National Conference 70 years since the founding of the Institute of Art History “G. Oprescu” of the Romanian Academy Bucharest, October 21-22, 2019<sup>31</sup>, which aroused the interest of the specialists present and whose suggestions were useful for the subsequent development of the study. Also, the articles published in our research material were well received: “A school. A life. Cantacuzinists,” “Cantacuzino: the war and the doctor,”<sup>32</sup> “The importance of the art school model of the Cantacuzino Institute for Romanian collecting. The passion for Far Eastern art in Romania at the beginning of the 20th century”<sup>33</sup>; “Two Romanian connoisseurs of Japanese wood engraving: Ion Cantacuzino and George Oprescu.”<sup>34</sup> Our attention during the research was drawn by the limited number of academic works, both in the field of the history of Romanian collecting and of Japonisme per se.

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<sup>28</sup> „Importanța Școlii de artă de la Institutul Cantacuzino pentru colecționismul românesc. Modelul Profesorului Ion Cantacuzino”.

<sup>29</sup> Japonismul ca marcă a occidentalizării artei românești. Colecționismul de artă extrem-orientală în rândurile artiștilor români”.

<sup>30</sup> „Sinuoasa istorie a colecției de artă extrem-orientală a generalului Gheorghe Băgulescu”.

<sup>31</sup> „Doi connoisseuri români ai gravurii în lemn japoneze: Ion Cantacuzino și George Oprescu”.

<sup>32</sup> „Lettre Internationale” Nr. 106 / Summer 2018, pages 11-15, and 16-18, Editura Institutului Cultural Român 2018.

<sup>33</sup> „Revista de Artă și Istoria Artei” Nr. 2, Editura Muzeului Municipiului București, 2019.

<sup>34</sup> Text in progress in the homage volume dedicated to the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Institute of Art History „G. Oprescu”, Edited by the Institute of Art History and the Romanian Academy.

At UNArte we identified some works related to a topic reached in our study regarding the “Toma Stelian” Museum<sup>35</sup>, as well as two doctoral works published later, which refer to the built heritage where there are multiple references to the researched topic<sup>36</sup>. They were of real use to us. In the field of Japonisme, we noticed the bachelor thesis and the master dissertation<sup>37</sup> on the origins of Japonisme and its evolution in the Western world, as well as the very interesting and current topic of *reverse-Japonisme*<sup>38</sup>. Among the major academic works that helped us understand the historical phenomenon itself, we must mention some doctoral theses elaborated by the members of the Japanese Language and Literature Department of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures in the University of Bucharest<sup>39</sup> who work intensely in the field of Japanology, in conferences and through various publications.

In the same field, strictly related to the area of study, we had the opportunity to collaborate with researcher Radu Leca<sup>40</sup>, who gave a presentation in 2017 entitled: “Staggered Diffusion: Towards a History of Romanian Japonisme,” at the conference *Japonismee în Global and Local Context* that took place in Budapest at the Ferenc Hopp Museum. The conclusion of his work, interpreting relatively brief data, was that of a center-periphery relationship in taking over the Japonisme of French origin in Romania. Taking also into account the geopolitical situation, the author identifies various types of influences that appeared discontinuously, manifested on different social levels within a phenomenon called for the first

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<sup>35</sup> We refer to Dana Gliga's bachelor's thesis as well as to Lucian Goilă's master's dissertation, conducted under the guidance of Conf. Ioana Beldiman.

<sup>36</sup> Marian Constantin-Murariu, „Internațional și autohton in the interior decoration of royal residences”, 2004, scientific coordinator Prof. academician Răzvan Theodorescu, Ph.D., and Oana Marinache, “Architecture and interior decoration of the residences of families Bibescu - Basarab Brâncoveanu”, 2015, scientific coordinator Univ. Prof. Ruxandra Demetrescu, Ph.D. We also give our special thanks to Mihaela Varga, who provided us with her doctoral thesis, “Art trade in twentieth century Romania”, a work coordinated by Univ. Prof. Gheorghe Buzatu Ph.D., 2006, at the Faculty of History of the University of Bucharest. Also in the field of published doctoral theses that were of real use to us, we mention that of Irina Spirescu “From East to West, interior decoration in princely and boyar residences (1774 - 1914), Editura NOI Media Print, Bucharest, 2010, and Andi Mihalache's “Time, object, story. Interior decorations in autobiographical literature”, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Publishing House, Iași, 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Both works belong to Georgiana Istrate (currently a student of Japanese Studies at the University of Marseille), being coordinated by Univ. Assistant. Ada Hajdu Ph.D.. It addresses the same theme in two articles published “In Search of the Unknown Masterpiece: Japanese Art at the 1900 Paris World's Fair” in *Caiete de istoria artei* Nr. 1, (coord.) Ada Hajdu and Mihnea Mihail, 2017, Editura UNArte, Bucharest, 2017, pages 35-56 and „Japanese art in the West in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the shaping of art history as a subject in the Japanese Empire”, in Simona Drăgan, Constantin Emil Bucur (coord.), „Eurostudii. Vol. 1. Incursiuni în vârstele Europei”, University of Bucharest Publishing House, Bucharest, 2019, pages 149-170.

<sup>38</sup> Reverse-japonisme: new term introduced by new art history studies referring to the effect that Western art has on Japanese art and culture, occurred after the opening of Japan (1853).

<sup>39</sup> We note the work of Alexandra-Marina Gheorghe “Japan and the Western World - the image of the other between 1853 and 1912”, Coordinator: Univ. Prof. Lucian Boia Ph.D., 2007, University of Bucharest.

<sup>40</sup> Radu Leca, associate professor at the International Institute for Asian Studies.

time Romanian Japonisme. Given the fact that the author presented his work the following year, in Romania, during an International Symposium entitled “Japan – Premodern, Modern And Contemporary,” 7th edition, we considered it as the reference state of the subject to which we will report the results of our study.

In the end, we will make a special mention regarding the aspects addressed in our study. As mentioned, the research refers to aspects related to the field of fine arts, and the references to the literary reception of the Far Eastern world appear to draw the general picture of the context, especially targeting literature/art criticism, and less the literary landscape. We leave the approach of these aspects to the linguists, and we must notice the existence of an extensive specialized bibliography, published mainly in the latest 30 years. Among the numerous academic titles, we mention the work “Major directions in the reception of the Japanese spirit in the Romanian literary and publishing space in the period 1920-2010,”<sup>41</sup> which we consulted to identify the way Japonisme was viewed in Romanian literature to compare the results obtained.

We note on this occasion the existence of specialized centers for the study of Japanese language and civilization, within the University of Bucharest, both at the Faculty of History and the Faculty of Foreign Languages, as well as at Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj, and the “Dimitrie Cantemir” Christian Faculty in Bucharest. These centers periodically organize congresses and symposia with national and international participation where linguistic and translation issues, civilizational, diplomatic issues but not art-related topics are up for debate. This year in March, we should have participated in the Congress with International Participation of the Center for Japanese Studies of the University of Bucharest with an accepted paper on collectors of Far Eastern art in interwar Romania with the paper titled The Unknown Connoisseur Gheorghe Bagulescu. We note the significant activity of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures in the field of academic studies related to Japanese culture and civilization.

Our approach begins in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, given that we wanted to refer to the entire influence exerted by Far Eastern cultures on Romanian civilization, and Japonisme was a late but important component of this phenomenon. As we will show, not at all by chance, this process begins under the influence of the two great neighboring empires, Habsburg and Tsarist,

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<sup>41</sup> Mihaela Haşu-Bălan, “Major directions in the reception of the Japanese spirit in the Romanian literary and publishing space in the period 1920-2010”, Doctoral thesis, Scientific Coordinator Univ. Prof. Ştefan Borbély Ph.D., Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Doctoral School of Literary Studies, Faculty of Letters.

because, later, with the establishment of the Romanian Kingdom, when there were migrations to the newly formed state, which coincided with the expansion means of reproducing images and with the ease of traveling, it also expanded in Romania. This moment coincided with the era of massive French influence in Romanian culture, being the most consistent way of spreading Japonisme in our country. We considered it useful to complete the image of this phenomenon by discussing examples of Far Eastern art collecting in the West (France and England) as well as presenting, in a separate chapter, the results obtained by researching the influences of Japonisme on Romanian fine arts, with the purpose to define the Romanian Japonisme and its features.

The second part of the paper discusses the ways of collecting objects of Far Eastern art, in an attempt to sketch the magnitude of this phenomenon as accurately as possible. We assessed in detail, presenting them in chronological order (to suggest the persistence of the phenomenon over several generations): the importance of Royal patronage, aristocratic collecting (characterized by defining a Far Eastern fashion in interior decorations), collections of artists, writers, and scientists, as well as exhibitions of this type from the era. The purpose was each time, to create the profiles of some collectors who had nodal roles in the network we tried to portray.

The vintage images, gathered in the album at the end of our work, reveal the development level of the taste for objects of Asian origin in Romanian society. Also, the photographs from the exhibitions and collections of the interwar period, presented in parallel with the current images from private collections and current exhibitions, bear witness to the way of metabolization of Asian art (and not only) that underwent a process of quasi-Europeanization and to the perception of the Romanian society on it (mainly considered a decorative art). The press folder annexed to our paper comprises examples of articles from the press of the time, with direct reference to this perception. However, we must mention the existence of a rich fund of such articles that will be observed later. The attached images intend to be a support and a more eloquent complement to the points of view discussed in the text. In addition to hitherto unknown images of some of the characters of our study, we can mention unique documents that we consider important for the history of Romanian collecting of Far Eastern art, such as the inventory of General Gheorghe Băgulescu's collection (made in October 1864, after his death in Cannes) or the Inventory of the Collection of Japanese engravings donated by Academician George Oprescu to The Engravings Department of the Romanian Academy Library.

In the end, we will emphasize the main intention of our research of gathering evidence on the existence of a true phenomenon of Romanian Far Eastern art collecting that spans over more than one century, emphasizing the characteristics that identify it in our culture and help us to place it in a European context. We also wanted to prove the influence of Oriental art on Romanian art, which helps us define *Romanian Japonisme*.

Given the extent of the subject and the transcendence of art history, I intended to describe a new framework for discussion in the field of visual studies in Romania. Also, our work on cultural history opens new topics belonging to the field of the history of taste, and it intends to be an innovative work in the little-studied history of Romanian collecting.

Corroborating all this research, we want to initiate an interpretive approach, which already goes beyond the field of art history and is part of a much broader one, close to *visual studies* and *new art history*, that of the relationship between art and society, at the confluence of several fields (history, history, and theory of art, anthropology, sociology, etc.) and intends to achieve relevant conclusions and their theoretical support. For their theoretical interpretation, we will use reference titles from foreign literature, which in recent years has been debating more and more topics of this type<sup>42</sup>. An example would be the symposium entitled *Global Art History and the Peripheries* (Paris, 2013), within the project *The Artl@s*. The newly described field of local Japonisme is beginning to take more shape.<sup>43</sup> Through the

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<sup>42</sup> Among them, we can mention: Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann, „Toward a Geography of Art”, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004; James Elkins, „Is Art History Global?” in *Art seminar*, Taylor & Francis, 2007; Arjun Appadurai, „How Histories Make Geographies: Circulation and Context in a Global Perspective”, *Transcultural Studies*, No. 1, 2010; Phyllis Floyd, „Japonisme in context: documentation, criticism, aesthetic reactions. Ann Arbor,” University of Michigan Press, 1986, 3 vol.; Shigemi Inaga, „Is Art History Globalizable? A Critical Commentary from a Far Eastern Point of View” in James Elkins (ed.), „Is Art History Global?” University College Cork, 2007; Thomas Da Costa Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel (eds.), „Circulations in the Global History of Art”, Ashgate Publishing Company, 2015; Claude Lévi-Strauss, „Locul culturii japoneze în lume” in *Cealaltă față a lunii. Scrieri despre Japonia*, Editura Polirom, 2013. Michel Espagne, *L’histoire de l’art comme transfert culturel. L’itinéraire d’Anton Springer*, Paris, Belin, 2009 [www.artlas.ens.fr](http://www.artlas.ens.fr); Piotr Piotrowski, „Toward a Horizontal History of the European Avant-Garde. In the Shadow of Yalta: Art and the Avant-garde in Eastern Europe, 1945-1989”, London, Reaktion Books, 2009; Chae Ryung Kim, „East meets West: Japonisme in the discourse of colonialism” in *The development of the modern art*, University of New York and Buffalo, Masters Abstracts International, M.A.I. 51/01 M (E), 2012, L. Steven Rosen, „Japan as Other: Orientalism and Cultural Conflict” in *Intercultural Communication*, November, issue 4.

<sup>43</sup> Ana Pawowska, „Some Remarks concerning polish japonisme movement from the modernist era”, in *Quintana. Revista de Estudos do Departamento de Historia da Arte*, num.16, enero-diciembre, 2017, pp. 296-326; Elena Diakonova, „Japonisme in Russia in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries, Japan and Russia. Three centuries of mutual images”, *Yulia Mikhailova și M. William Steele* (ed.), 2008, Brill, pp. 36-46; Darya Koltsova, „Maximilian Voloshin’s Japanese Print Collection in the Context of European Orientalism”, în *The Journal of Education, Culture and Society* nr 2, 2013, pp. 316-324, Rossamund Bartlett, „Japonisme and Japanophobia: The Russo-Japanese War in Russia Cultural Consciousness,” in *The Russian Review*, Volume 67, Issue 1; Zoe LaLonde, *Globalism and Japanese Prints in the Early 20th Century*, <http://onestop.umn.edu/>. The exhibition „The Call of the East. Japonisme as Reflected in the Prints of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy” took place in this year in Budapest, curators Kata Bodor, Mirjam Dénes, Eszter Földi, The National Art Museum Budapest, 5 February - 17 May, 2020.

appeal to critical and interpretive analysis, as well as through a diachronic discourse, we aimed to prove the phenomenon of Far Eastern art collecting in Romania, documenting it in its evolution and development over more than a century, with its specific characteristics. Through a synchronic analysis, complementary to the diachronic one, we proved the existence of Romanian Japonisme in the interwar period, arguing its stylistic specificities as well as the similarities or differences from the different types of Japonisme manifested at the European level.

With our paper, we aimed to create a general framework, opening the possibility of new studies in this field, approaching and deepening new topics belonging to the area of visual studies in Romania.

The work consists of two volumes, meant to complement each other. The first volume comprises five chapters, ten annexes, and a rich bibliography (both general and specialized).

### **Abstract of the chapters:**

**Chapter I**, titled “**At the confluence of civilizations,**” briefly describes the geography of Orientalism, defining the meaning of cultural studies on the Near East and the Far East, and the relationship between Japonisme and Orientalism, reviewing their characteristics. The emergence of scientific interest, specific to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century for linguistics and ethnography, brings into question the importance of the cultural binomial Dora d'Istria (1828-1888) - Angelo de Gubernatis (1840-1913) and the many Romanian intellectuals who gravitated around them: Alexandru Odobescu (1834-1895), Bogdan Petriceicu Hașdeu (1838-1907), Vasile Alexandrescu Urechia (1834-1901), and Grigore Tocilescu (1850-1909). The same sphere of interest in Oriental studies evokes the figures and activity of the members of the Aiud School, followers of the original Turanism of the Hungarians, such as Count Gheza Kunn (1838-1905) or the Tibetologist Alexander Csoma de Kőrös (1784-1842), haunted by the connection *uiguri-unguri*, and Hugo von Meltzl (1846-1908), who created in Cluj the first comparative culture magazine in the world.

**Chapter II**, titled “**Reception of Far Eastern art in Romania,**” describes the beginnings of the interest of Romanians in the cultures and civilizations of the Far East - a



cultural space where, in the premodern era of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, artistic echoes appear with the travels of Nicolae Milescu, the sword-bearer (1636-1708). The houses with Chinese details, with the “orders” in Iași about which the chronicler Miron Costin (1633-1691) spoke, are mentioned; the testimony of a Polish traveler about the flowers painted, in 1686; also here, on a Chinese gold background, the unusual stuccos on the facades in Fundeni remind us of Indo-Chinese screens. The emergence of woodcut and luxury handicrafts from China and Japan into the Romanian space begins with Baron Samuel von Bruckenthal (1721-1803), who had, among others, a Japanese cabinet and many decorative *chinoiserie*<sup>44</sup> objects, denoting Europe's appetite for a new type of aesthetics. Starting from this case and observing the traces left by the Transylvanian Saxon doctors and naturalists who reached the antipodes, we propose an interesting hypothesis, not discussed previously, namely that the interest in the Far East appeared in the Kingdom of Romania not only through the well-known French pathway but also through Transylvanian scholars and artists. With the time of the Japanese resurrection in the Meiji period, of the cultural openness and the political, economic, and military assertion of Japan, after the 1905 victory over Russia and the discovery of Japanese art by European Impressionists and intellectuals, after the World's Exhibition in Vienna in 1873 and the one in Paris in 1878, we note the appearance of the first Romanian-Japanese diplomatic and cultural contacts. Their evolution over time is described at the end of this chapter.

**Chapter III**, titled “**Royal Collecting - the passion for Far Eastern art**” describes the universe of Romanian royalty by analyzing the extent and significance of this artistic taste in each generation of the Royal family. Carol I (1839 - 1914) Prince and King, holds an eminent place. The son of a collector, an avid collector himself, as the collection published by Bachelin proves it, in relation to renowned exegetes such as Anton Springer (1825-1891), eager to make others enjoy art - the Royal Exhibition “Expoziția Domnească” of 1869 proved it - Carol knew how to differentiate the Chinese art from the Japanese one (the two special rooms in His residence show it). He was surrounded by young foreign artists, such as Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), who came to Peles from a Japanese background, was close to a character such as Carol Popp de Szathmári (1828-1881), who had the opportunity to portray a Chinese Muslim prince under special conditions, and the sovereign also acquired Japanese ceramics from Istanbul,

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<sup>44</sup> Chinoiserie: indicates the European taste that emerged in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries for the interpretation and imitation of Chinese art, and artistic traditions (and generally from East Asia). It manifested in various fields: music, theater, literature, architecture, interior and environmental design, decorative arts, especially ceramics, embroidery.

through watercolourist Amedeo Preziosi (1816 - 1882), while Queen Elizabeth (1843 - 1916), attracted by the theosophy with so many Oriental roots, had relations with a French elite fascinated by the East, with Pierre Loti (1850 - 1923) and Anatole France (1824 - 1944). The interest for the development of specific culture and institutions in the time of King Ferdinand (1865 - 1927) is recalled when the appearance of the great Romanian art collections is also evoked. It was also the turn of the Princess and then Queen Marie of Romania (1875 - 1938) to flirt, with her proverbial good taste, with Chinese porcelain and jade objects, while her landscape collaborator Friedrich Rebhuhn (1883-1957) was designing a Japanese fountain for the Cișmigiu garden. The sources of this passion are analyzed as well as the artistic reinterpretation that the Queen gives them. There are two important and dedicated subchapters: the first - to the connections of the Romanian society, especially the members of the elite, with the Royal family, considered a model worth following in the area of taste for Far Eastern art; and the other - to female art collecting of this kind. “When taste is feminine, these testimonies from the last two centuries about the arrangement of some interiors, about some costumes, the forerunner character is proven, there is an aspect - the always more innovative feminine taste - that psychologists and sociologists have long researched for other meridians, and for which we have few testimonies, not even those interpreted.”<sup>45</sup> The special merits of many personalities are evoked here - such as members of the Bibescu, Brâncoveanu, and Știrbey families, or Elisa Brătianu (1870 - 1957), and Otilia Cosmuță (1873 - 1951) - to mention just a few of them, whose joint efforts helped to the Europeanization of Romanian culture. Finally, the reign of Carol II (1893 - 1953) correctly evoked, with its many positive aspects, was the era of “elevated collecting”. King Carol II, who, in 1920, as Crown Prince, had stepped on Japanese ground, was also the patron of an era of culture in which the major collections of Far Eastern art appeared in Bucharest. By evoking the phenomenon studied in the royal art collection, we aimed to draw attention to this rather newly proven dimension -, not yet discussed by specialists.” What we wanted to evoke was the continuity of the royal family members' connections with the Romanian society, on its different levels: aristocratic, cultural, and intellectual - throughout the existence of the Romanian monarchy. We contextualized the passion for Far Eastern art as one of the significant manifestations of this symbiotic relationship, the result of which was the rapid westernization of Romanian society. We

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<sup>45</sup> Răzvan Theodorescu, „Artele decorative-simptom stilistic în civilizația românească,” in *Studii și articole de istorie și istoria artei* (edited by The National Museum Cotroceni, Editura Sigma, 2005), p. 234.

interpreted the taste for Japonisme as a symptom of our Europeanness, a mark of the privileged connection that Romanian civilization had with French culture.

**The fourth chapter, titled “Great Romanian collectors of Far Eastern art: Gheorghe Băgulescu, Ion Cantacuzino, George Oprescu,”** recounts the fate of people consumed by the passion to collect, and who understood in-depth the spirit of the Far East. There is accurate data for the collection of Prof. George Oprescu (1881 - 1969), from the London acquisitions of Japanese engravings to the exhibitions of the “Toma Stelian” Museum and the donations to the Romanian Academy. On the contrary, the collection of Prof. Ion Cantacuzino (1863 - 1934) evoked properly along with bringing back to attention to the phenomenon of “Cantacuzinists” conquered by the secrets of engraving and the Orient - Alexandru Slătineanu (1873 - 1939), Mihai Ciucă (1883 - 1969), C-tin Ionescu Mihăiești (1883 - 1962), and Ștefan S.Nicolau (1896 - 1967) - dissipated; its situation remains a deplorable cultural fact. As for the Colonel, then General Gheorghe Băgulescu (1886 - 1963), a remarkable connoisseur<sup>46</sup> of Japanese history, culture, civilization, and art, military attaché in Japan since 1934, then ambassador between 1941 and 1943, the data on the Sino-Japanese Exhibition that he organized between 1939 and 1940 at the Romanian Athenaeum and the project of architect State Baloșin on the settlement of a museum of Oriental art in Herăstrău, it is very clear; it was more difficult to attempt to reconstruct the collection for which we resorted to archives, documents, and objects in various institutions spread across Europe - the National Museum of Art of Romania (Bucharest), Palais Carnoles (Menton), British Museum (London), as well as unique documents in the family's possession. Through our efforts to re-sketch the collections of these outstanding personalities, who wanted to donate them to the Romanian state, we aimed to prove the value of these collections that give character and define the phenomenon of Romanian collecting of Far Eastern art, a fact attested by exhibition events dedicated to this subject in that period.

**The fifth chapter, titled “Romanian Japonisme. Influences of Japonisme on Romanian art. Artists - collectors of Far Eastern art,”** wants to establish the limits of the approach of the Far Eastern spirit in art - and especially in Romanian painting. The importance

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<sup>46</sup> A *connoisseur* is a passionate collector, who becomes erudite by diligently studying the collected objects. The connoisseur can conceive a vast collection in terms of number of works, even if not very wide in terms of thematic extent. Unlike the expert, the taste of the connoisseur can be subjective, hence errors can occur. The connoisseur can share his knowledge with those around him.

of the French formative environment is evoked here, of the Romanian painters educated in Paris in the epoch of blossom of Japonisme. The different ways of adhering to the new Japanising aesthetics are highlighted: from the Japanising painting of Nicolae Grigorescu (1838-1907) and Tonitza's Japonisme to the influences of Buddhist philosophy on the art of Constantin Brâncuși (1876-1957); from the demonstrative decorativism of Samuel Mütznier (1884-1959) to the use of Japanese props, by Theodor Pallady (1871-1956) and Gheorghe Petrașcu (1872-1949) or, more rarely, to the partial assertion of this new stylistic vision, as in the case of Ștefan Luchian (1868-1916), Ștefan Popescu (1872 - 1948) or Ștefan Dimitrescu (1886-1933). Although it was only a stylistic trend in the work of these artists, we considered that its existence should be noted and capitalized. At the end of the chapter, we evoked the figures of several artists-collectors who turned their attention and skills toward objects of Far Eastern art: Adrian Maniu (1891-1968), Hrandt Avakian (1900 -1990), Ligia Macovei (1916 - 1998) or Vasile Grigore (1935-2012), who donated their collections to the state.

The ten annexes come to point out specific topics, the addition of which provides a clearer picture of the researched topic. Here we find the list of Bucharest merchants of Oriental objects, the inventories of the royal collections after the abdication in 1947, the legacy of Elena Lupescu (1899 -1977), the list of exhibitions and publications of Far Eastern art from the period studied. Also, there are some working tools among the annexes, useful for the proper understanding of the subject (a glossary of Japanese artistic terms, the list with the definitions of specialized terms, and the periodization of Chinese and Japanese art).

The paper ends with an extensive bibliographic list, structured into a general bibliography (volumes, articles from periodicals and publications, scientific communications, doctoral theses, compendia, archives, exhibition catalogs, volumes of memoirs, dictionaries, and homage volumes); a specific bibliography on the issues of history, diplomacy, history, and theory of art; and a specific bibliography on the issue of Romanian art history and collecting.

The second volume represents the imagistic support of this scientific approach. We considered that, for a better understanding of our endeavor, we should evoke, in this second part of the work, through images, both the history of Romanian collecting of Far Eastern art during the researched century (1870-1970) and the existence of Romanian Japonisme. The narrative built in the first part of this study is visually reconstructed following the chronology, leaving a large space for the development of the newly introduced theme of our research - namely Romanian Japonisme. Also, by introducing archival documents - such as the Gheorghe Băgulescu Succession Inventory and the File of the Oprescu Donation, the aim was to highlight some documents, either unpublished or insufficiently capitalized, which give scientific weight

to our study and can also open new levels for further research. Given the difficulties encountered (the absence of experts in this field, the difficult access to the archives of museum institutions, the lack of any form of digitization, the difficulty in obtaining the rights to publish images - to mention only the most important ones), we want to emphasize mainly that this part of the paper was not conceived and drawn up as a scientific catalog, but as an imagistic support of the theoretical discourses elaborated in the first part of our research. It can also be read as a vintage album that is intended to be a proof of the need to restore the value of the Far Eastern art heritage existing in Romania.

## Conclusions:

We set out to study the importance of the phenomenon of Japonisme on Romanian fine arts and its expression in public taste, as long as it existed, understanding by this the influence it had on Romanian collecting in that period. Thus, referring to the Western model, we will draw some conclusions regarding the traits of this phenomenon of Far Eastern art collecting in Romania as well as its specific characters. The subject approached by us can be discussed either through a type of narrative discourse (tributary to the tradition of art history) or by addressing current issues related to the field of *new art history*. It goes without saying that the model followed this time by Romanian culture was the French one. This fact is obvious, given the massive presence of Romanian nobility studying in France; this fact ensured a direct contact with the artistic phenomena in progress at that time, in addition to French education. It explains the relative delay in the manifestation of Japanese fashion in our country. The most important differences also come out of socio-economic considerations. For example, while in France the large collections belonged to the bourgeoisie, especially to industrialists and bankers who, after making fortunes, had reached the stage where such collections satisfied their need for representation, in Romania, those who collected objects of Far Eastern art were generally aristocrats, very well educated, who lived in Paris and had access to the Parisian salons of the time where they started to enjoy such collections. They surrounded themselves with art objects to satisfy their passion for beauty and not as much collected to gain social recognition.

The cultural delay compared with the West, as well as the historical situation of the relatively newly constituted Romanian state, generated a predominant interest in traditional arts in our country, and later in the support and creation of a Romanian school of painting. Our few main collections of Asian art (King Carol I, Professor Ion Cantacuzino, Professor George Oprescu, General Gheorghe Băgulescu) are considered exceptions. Fortunately, however, we are talking about qualitatively significant collections, which leads to a decrease in the importance of the numerical criterion. We would attribute this to the exceptional character of collectors who had the passion and patience to become true leaders in the field of Japanese art; in the case of General Băgulescu, where we talk about the most important collection of its kind in Romania, we can add the chance of having lived for a long time in Japan and China.

The relatively important dimension of the phenomenon in the Romanian society might be due to the local conditions specific to the Romanian society. Thus, while the taste for the Middle East (Egypt, Algeria, Ottoman Empire) was culturally discovered in France, with the

Napoleonic Wars and the end of the Ottoman Empire, giving rise to an era of travels and discoveries, the Orient has a different status in the Romanian Principalities. The oriental way of life had become ubiquitous here; the Romanians eagerly wanted Europeanization, and they succeeded in a very short time, only a few decades. The adoption of Japonisme, both artistically and in terms of taste, must be interpreted as facets of an intense process of modernization and Westernization.

However, it should be mentioned that Japonisme itself did not have the same influence on Romanian society as it did in France. Due to the absence of a specialized art market and a press dedicated to art and art criticism, it did not have the chance to become a mass phenomenon, which in time led to its misperception.

Although we can say that it meant more than a Japanising vogue, Japonisme in Romanian fine arts manifested itself almost exclusively in the field of painting without any influence on architecture, sculpture, or decorative arts.

However, Romanian literature has seen wider manifestations, although with a significant delay compared to the European ones, which makes Japonisme find echoes, especially in the works of symbolist poets. As an element of novelty, we should mention the invention belonging to Ion Pillat - the one-line poem. The really important works of fiction were written by authors who were lucky enough to spend long periods in Japan (for example, Ioan Timuș and Gheorghe Băgulescu). However, Romanian literature has seen wider manifestations, although with a significant delay compared to the European ones, which makes Japonisme find echoes, especially in the works of symbolist poets. As an element of novelty, we should mention the invention belonging to Ion Pillat - the one-line poem. The really important works of fiction were written by authors who were lucky enough to spend long periods in Japan (for example, Ioan Timuș and Gheorghe Băgulescu). We think that the Sino-Japanese art exhibition at the Athenaeum in December 1939-June 1940, which exhibited part of General Băgulescu's collection, played a major role in the late glory of Japonisme, to the same extent as the Professor Cantacuzino „school,” that generated important collecting disciples among medical personalities.

All this proves that, although late and to a lesser extent, Romanian culture could take over and process French cultural models, which places it among European cultures.

The collections of a certain country, in a certain period, measure the level of art and culture of that country, which they embody and exhibit. The basic idea of the collections established in the modern era, which had served until then as a means of pampering a privileged minority, turns into the need to become accessible to all, and at the same time to become a

national heritage. It begins to prioritize the character of representation, whether personal or national and the sharing of artistic joy. The educational component, regarding the addressability to a wide range of viewers, begins to be a goal per se; as we have proved in the case of collectors of Far Eastern art, it is valid primarily due to different types of collectors, be they the patron kind like Gheorghe Băgulescu, or the museographer kind, as in the case of Gheorghe Oprescu (a true cultural manager, *avant la lettre*).

An important direction of studying a collection can lead to the reconstruction of the taste of time, readable by choosing the objects that the collector wanted to own. From here to the idea of exhibiting the collection in a museum, it was just a step taken with the establishment of national states, as a sign of the transition to modernity.

Following our study that took us through countless art collections, we found the magnitude of the phenomenon of Far Eastern art collecting in Romania. Its dimensions are larger than they may seem at first glance without being comparable to those achieved by this trend in other countries. It can be compared to the taste for Islamic/Ottoman art, as these objects often coexist in the same collections.

Analyzing the general context, as well as several particular cases, we managed to determine some characteristics regarding the profile and traits of the Romanian collector of Far Eastern art in the years 1870-1970. The great art collections were established in Romania also in this period, probably because the great collectors chose only in a few cases to hoard a single type of works of art and opted for decorative objects, and, in many cases, folk objects, in addition to painting.

Another essential conclusion of our study was the finding of the existence of the current that we can call *Romanian Japonisme*. The final chapter, dedicated to this subject, sought to affirm and prove this fact, hitherto undisputed in the studies of art history or visual studies. Its belonging to the European Orientalism of the time places us in the European chronology, diminishing the perception of delay of the Romanian society. The beneficial fashion of study travels led to the adoption of Japonisme by artists less out of the need for change and passion for exoticism (as happened in the Western world) but especially out of the desire to overcome academicism and to acquire a new aesthetics. The personal desire for the success of Romanian painters, who studied in the French Academies of Art (whether official or free) during the blossom of Japonisme, in the age of great Universal Exhibitions and large exhibitions of Far Eastern art, can also be seen as a psychological factor. Their desire to be accepted by the French artistic system may have determined some of them (Eustațiu Stoenescu, George Demetrescu Mirea, Michel Simonidy- to name just a few) to adopt the themes and the



style that could ease the acceptance of their works in the great French salons. The adoption of Japonisme can also be interpreted as a desire for recognition by the established artistic system, which increases their chances of success once returned to the country.

*Romanian Japonisme* is an additional proof of the adoption of artistic modernism together with the other European countries, but with specific characteristics related to the intensity of the phenomenon and its further development. Its development, along with the development of painting in a national art school, as well as the development of Far Eastern art collecting, benefited from the moment of maximum blossom of Romanian culture, represented by the period of royalty, benefiting from the emergence of institutional frames: museums, art schools, private collections; whereas the phenomenon of patronage, state, and private scholarships, study travels, as well as the emergence of national salons as form of exhibition, strengthened it at the same time.

Royalty also stimulated the creation of a style of interior decoration in which the passion for beauty manifested to a large extent, also by highlighting the collections of Far Eastern decorative arts.

What Japonisme brought into Romanian culture and society had the significance of a mimetic phenomenon, but its value and intensity can define a separate history of *Romanian Japonisme*, inseparable from that of collecting of Far Eastern art objects. The two are interconnected facets that delineate the current of *national Japonisme*.

In our paper we wanted to investigate the reception of Far Eastern art, under its many facets, from a complex critical perspective, insisting on how the specific collection of Asian art objects is relevant to understanding the evolution of Romanian society (from the anthropological, cultural and civilizational points of view). The history of some collections and their reception in the Romanian society formed the corpus of the study which focuses not only on the issues of the history of collecting but also on the study of mentalities, aiming to incorporate all dimensions of how the Sino-Japanese space of civilization was culturally received.

Our analysis led us to the conclusion a significant influence of Japonisme and the taste for Far Eastern art are present in the Romanian society, comparable as a period of manifestation and duration with similar phenomena in the surrounding countries. This influence manifested itself from the time of the maximum blossom of Japan in Western Europe, continuing until the beginning of World War II; its echoes persisted for several decades and it manifested mainly at the level of elites - aristocratic, artistic, intellectual, financial.

The direct contact with the Japanese world, especially after the end of the First World War, led to the prolongation of this current and its spread with the appearance of the press, art chronicle, and the institutionalization of the artistic system through numerous exhibitions of major collections of Far Eastern art in Romania. We consider this taste for Japanese art (mostly) as a desire for modernization and closeness to Western civilization - a symptom of Romania's Europeanization, resulting from both mimicry and desire for recognition and the need to adopt the new and to overcome academicism.

To conclude, we want to draw attention to the fact that our study wanted to highlight the existence of Romanian Japonisme, to define it, and to outline its limits and characteristics, without exhausting this subject. We started from understanding the existence of this phenomenon, previously completely unnoticed by Romanian art critics, and we put together all the observations and discoveries that appeared during the research, managing to prove the existence of Romanian Japonisme as a mark of the Europeanization of Romanian society. In our opinion, the study represents the opening of a new field of research; and thus, our purpose is reached.

**Key-words:** Far Eastern art collecting, connoisseur, Gheorghe Băgulescu, Ion Cantacuzino and the “Cantacuzinists”, George Oprescu, Romanian Japonisme