

THE RESTORATION OF ARCHITECTURAL SURFACES IN JAPANESE TEMPLES: REFLECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The strong cultural inheritance of neoclassical aesthetic instances about the "candid" perfection of Ancient Architecture and Statuary makes, even today, the theme of "the color" in the classical world a topic debated among experts in the field, far from the common imaginary. The studies on the subject, from Hittorff to the recent didactic exhibitions ("*L'Ara com'era*", "*I Colori del Bianco*"), with difficulty affect that image supported by the tangible feedback of the material ruins, ruderized and without its covering, as well as repeated in the numerous 18th century depictions. The lack of a moment of cultural breakdown as deep as the one that in the Mediterranean area marked the transition between the "polytheistic" and "monotheistic" world, has produced very different outcomes in the Asian area. Templar architecture can not be considered devoid of its figurative apparatus. Neither the superficial coating which, as Philippot asserted, constitutes the last layer of matter can be ignored. Asian Architecture must still be able to express the contents for which it was designed and can not be mutilated in its constituent parts. Through a comparison with the Mediterranean world, the paper investigates the theme of conservation of surfaces in Japanese architecture, in particular Buddhist temples, also confuting some preconceptions about "reconstructive restoration" with which we commonly label the Japanese reality, based on a superficial reading of Shinto *Shikinen Sengû* ritual practice.

The analyzed interventions are real "restoration operations", based on an accurate study and supported by the historical data. The works carried out from the kondō of the Hōryū-ji Shrine in Nara to the most recent Phoenix Hall of Biyōdō-in in Uji, both Unesco Heritage, clarify how the possibility of integration and recovery of some surfaces can not to be prosecuted at the expense of the authenticity of historical data, while other maintenance operations are essential for the preservation of the architectural and cultural values of the temples.

Parole chiave/Key-words: templar architecture, Unesco, intangible cultural heritage, traditional techniques