

| Introduction

Beata Kubiak Ho-Chi, Jędrzej Greń

This two-volume publication brings together texts from the international conference organized by the Chair of Japanese Studies at the University of Warsaw on October 23–25, 2019. The event was held to commemorate the 100 years of Japanese Studies at the University of Warsaw (Fig. 1) and was part of the celebration of the centenary of establishing diplomatic relations between Poland and Japan. The Embassy of Japan in Poland and the Polish Association for Japanese Studies (PAJS) granted honorary patronage to this event.

The conference opened with inaugural speeches by the Vice-Rector for Scientific Affairs of the University of Warsaw, Prof. Maciej Duszczyk, His Excellency the Ambassador of Japan to Poland, Mr. Kawada Tsukasa, a representative of the Japan Foundation, Ms. Tada Sanae, Dean of the Faculty of Oriental Studies, Prof. Piotr Taracha, a former Polish Honorary Consul in Japan, Mrs. Takashima Kazuko, and the Head of the Chair of Japanese Studies, Prof. Agnieszka Kozyra. Afterwards, Prof. Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska, Prof. Mikołaj Melanowicz, and Okazaki Tsuneo-sensei gave talks delineating the history of Japanese Studies at the University of Warsaw, additionally illustrated by a special exhibition dedicated to this theme. Those were followed by lectures from four special guests – people regarded as the most outstanding researchers of Japanese and Polish culture. For many years, they have been cooperating with the University of Warsaw and the Chair of Japanese Studies and have been awarded various distinctions for their scientific activities and translations, as well as for their work in strengthening cultural ties between Poland and Japan. The guests, in order of their appearance on stage, were: Prof. Numano Mitsuyoshi from the University of Tokyo, Prof. Sekiguchi Tokimasa from

the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Prof. Watanabe Hideo from Shinshū University, and Prof. Inaga Shigemi from the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in Kyoto.

The focal point of the celebrations was the international conference *Unique or Universal? Japan and Its Contribution to World Civilization* (October 24), during which more than fifty researchers in Japanese studies coming from various countries around the world (Japan, USA, Romania, Germany, Ukraine, Turkey, the Netherlands, Poland) and representing almost thirty academic centers and scientific institutions presented papers in three main parallel sections: (1) History, Sociology, and Education; (2) Visual Arts, Performing Arts, and Aesthetics; (3) Literary and Linguistic Studies. Their aim was to consider and discuss Japan's contributions to world cultural heritage.

The conference also included many accompanying events that highlighted the role of humanities and culture in promoting knowledge and in building lasting interpersonal bonds that transcend geographical, linguistic, and cultural barriers. One of them was a lecture by the world-famous Japanese writer, Ms. Kawakami Hiromi, entitled *Revival of Classical Literature in Contemporary Literature*. Ms. Kawakami was invited to Poland by our Chair to celebrate the centenary of Japanese Studies at the University of Warsaw and to emphasize the importance of literature and translation in international relations. She also signed the Polish translation of *Kamisama 2011 (Niedźwiedzi bóg)* made specifically for this occasion by Prof. Beata Kubiak Ho-Chi with the participation of her students from the Chair of Japanese Studies.

Another important event was the poetry workshop with Mr. Ozawa Minoru, a recognized Japanese *haijin* – a poet of haiku, the shortest Japanese poem form that has captivated the world for many decades. The workshop was attended by students of Japanese Studies, who could consult their poetry with a haiku master. The calm and deeply introspective atmosphere that filled the meeting of the haiku makers was further complemented by a tasting of matcha green tea, served in unique tea bowls by Japanese Studies students under the direction of our resident Urasenke tea master, Urszula Sōu Mach-Bryson. It should be added that preparing green tea in the Kaian Japanese tea pavilion located in the

University of Warsaw Library is an accompanying event organized regularly and offers a unique experience for anyone interested in the Japanese tea ceremony.

The conference also featured two panels which tackled issues of culture, including literature, and Polish–Japanese relations: (1) *What Fascinates Us in Foreign Cultures? Japanese Studies in Poland and Polish Studies in Japan* – a panel hosted by Prof. Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska, and (2) *Literature Without Borders. Polish–Japanese and Japanese–Polish translations of fiction* – a panel hosted by Prof. Beata Kubiak Ho-Chi. The world's foremost Japanese and Polish researchers and translators were present.

The initial idea of the conference was born from the phenomenon of undisputed popularity of Japanese Studies among university candidates in Poland.¹ Where has all this interest in Japan come from and what makes it so strong? Is Japan interesting enough to spur young people's imagination and devotion towards studying it simply due to its uniqueness? Or has its culture perhaps gradually become universally recognized, thus dissolving it into the global sea of ideas, both enriching it and becoming more familiar to us? Maybe today, in the age of globalization and blurred boundaries, Western and Japanese cultures already share the same track? Bruno Latour has pointed out how weak the opposition between culture and nature is.² Is this phenomenon, so inherent to the Japanese culture, gradually becoming our own, Western reality? What about borders between image and text?

In his Nobel Lecture given in 1968, titled *Japan, the Beautiful and Myself*, Kawabata Yasunari described the world of Japanese uniqueness through the prism of inaccessible poetry, Zen mysticism, and the aesthetic category of *mono no aware*.³ On the other hand, in his 1994 speech *Japan, the Ambiguous and Myself*, Ōe Kenzaburō discussed Japan differently

¹ Today, Japanese Studies is the second most popular BA major at the University of Warsaw with 15 times more candidates than our admission quota.

² See B. Latour, *Politics of Nature. How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*, trans. C. Porter, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA–London 2004.

³ Cf. Y. Kawabata, *Japan, the Beautiful and Myself*, Nobel Lecture. Nobel Prize.org. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1968/kawabata/lecture/>; accessed: 10.04.2023.

– as a culture deeply split between the East and the West, yet culturally isolated in Asia. Still, as he stated in Stockholm, he put his literary efforts into “curing this wound”⁴ by promoting European – yet universal – post-war humanism, tolerance, and peace in Japan. Has this wound been healed?

Today, Japan is a leading contributor and inspiration to the world’s culture and economy – from *ukiyo-e* to manga, anime and ‘Superflat’ art, from Nobel Prize winners in literature to world-renowned film directors and video games, from candlestick charts to Nikkei 225. What will happen with Japanese ‘uniqueness’ as it becomes more and more universal in the contemporary transcultural world, so aptly described by Wolfgang Welsch?⁵ Or maybe Motoori Norinaga was right, and still only the Japanese people themselves are able to sense *mono no aware*?⁶

The authors of the selected conference texts, reflecting on Japan’s contribution to world civilization and the uniqueness or universality of some areas of its culture, prepared the papers that made up this publication.

The introductory part of the first volume consists of two texts paying homage to the tradition of Japanese Studies at the University of Warsaw. They have been written by Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska and Okazaki Tsuneo, who focus on the subject of history of the Japanese Studies in Poland. Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska describes the beginnings and developments of the academic program of Japanese Studies with a special focus on Prof. Wiesław Kotański, who should be regarded as the founding father of Japan-related research in Poland. Okazaki Tsuneo, on the other hand, gives an insight into the difficult realities of teaching Japanese, especially in the context of the 1989 political and economic transition to

⁴ See K. Ōe, *Japan, The Ambiguous and Myself*, Nobel Lecture. Nobel Prize. org. <https://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1994/oe/lecture/>; accessed: 10.04.2023.

⁵ See W. Welsch, “Transculturality. The Changing Forms of Cultures Today,” *Filozofski Vestnik* 2001, vol. 22, no. 2, pp. 59–86. <https://ojs.zrc-sazu.si/filozofski-vestnik/article/view/3602>; accessed: 10.04.2023.

⁶ N. Motoori, “Awareben” [“On Aware”], [in:] *Motoori Norinaga zenshū* [Complete Works of Motoori Norinaga], vol. 4, Chikuma Shobō, Tokyo 1969.

democracy and subsequent opening of former-communist Poland to the West.

Part I of the first volume, *Philosophy and History*, opens with a chapter by Inaga Shigemi who – in an attempt to measure the extent of Japanese contribution to world civilization – examines three cases of cross-cultural transfers between the West and Japan spanning from the eighteenth to the twentieth century.

On the other hand, the question of uniqueness of Japanese culture is addressed by Agnieszka Kozyra in the context of Nishida Kitarō's philosophical view of reality as an absolutely contradictory self-identity. The author interprets this idea in a broader context of distinguishing features of Western and Eastern cultures and the spirit of science in Japanese culture.

Wakui Yōko focuses on the concept of 'binal-relationship,' developed by Mori Arimasa, who regarded it as an important notion of Japanese culture. According to Mori, the incompleteness of 'binal-relationship' results in the formation of the category known as *mono no aware*.

The historical section of Part I consists of a chapter by Jędrzej Greń, who describes early seventeenth-century English–Japanese relations in the context of Japanese gift-giving practices and social etiquette adopted by the English during their stay in Japan.

In Part II: *Aesthetics and Visual Arts*, Yamanashi Makiko introduces the Japanese concept of *ma* as an important aesthetic attitude present in the Japanese society and culture. She examines the concept not only as a tool for inter-cultural dialogue between Japan and Western cultures, but also as a means of communication between the past and the present in Japanese culture itself.

Svitlana Rybalko and Nomura Chieko have devoted their paper to presenting artistic works created in the 1920s by Ukrainian avant-garde artists who visited the Ogasawara Islands. The chapter focuses on cultural differences depicted by the artists as well as addresses selected issues of artistic communication and dialogue of cultures.

In the chapter by Aleksandra Görlich which closes the first volume, the author presents a unique artistic style of Japanese depictions of foreigners produced during the opening of Japan in the nineteenth century. Taking examples of Japanese woodblock prints, the author focuses on the results of mixing Japanese and foreign elements, as well as on the way in which they were used in these illustrations.

The second part of the conference texts, which discuss topics belonging to such fields as literature, language, theater, and film, has been included in the second volume of this publication.

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Through this publication, we would like to express our gratitude to the Japan Foundation, Toshiba International Foundation, Takashima Foundation, Faculty of Oriental Studies of the University of Warsaw, and the University of Warsaw. Without their generous support, this important event could not have taken place. We thank all speakers and guests. Special thanks are due to Ms. Lidia Rozmus for preparing a wonderful Zen-inspired exhibition *In the Search for Lost Silence* which accompanied the conference. We thank the artists from the Ikenobō School who provided conference participants with an unforgettable aesthetic experience, as beautiful ikebana compositions were prepared each day and placed in all the conference rooms and halls; Maria Żelazny, a Japanologist and graphic designer who collaborated with us on conference materials and this anthology; all the students who with great commitment helped us during the conference, as well as those who graced the celebrations with a moving musical performance. We are also extremely grateful to Mr. Ueda Susumu and his choir of more than one hundred singers who touched the hearts of all participants with their performance of *Requiem Project. Prayer for Peace*.



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INAUGURATION CEREMONY 10:00-12:00
100 Years of Japanese Studies at the University of Warsaw
SPECIAL LECTURES 12:30-16:10
Numano Mitsuysoshi (University of Tokyo) "Strange Encounters in the Space Between Japan and Poland: Mutual interest and influence between Japanese literature and Polish literature"
Sekiuchi Tatsuhisa (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies) "One's Own Advantages of the Combinesome Japanese: How to Appreciate and Nourishing World Literature"
Watanabe Hideo (Shinshu University) 「かぐや姫と通じ——漢文文化と日本文化」
Inaga Shigenori (International Research Center for Japanese Studies) "How to study 'unique' or 'universal'? A comparative approach to the Japanese studies"
EXHIBITIONS VERNISSAGES 16:10-17:10
Lidia Rózsa, *In Search for Lost Silence*
Kobayashi Michio, *Yūgen*, Takahashi Harumi
Ikenobo Ikebana Exposition
Chair of Japanese Studies Photo Exposition
Old Library
University of Warsaw Main Campus
26/28 Krakowskie Przedmieście St.

HAIKU WORKSHOP 寄物ワークショップ 9:30-11:00
Ozawa Minoru, poet haiku
『俳句におけるモニタズム』(Animism in haiku)
69 Nowy Świat St., 3rd Floor, Room 149

(金) 25/10
KARTEKOWA HISTORIA POLSKI-JAPANEZSKA 11:30-12:30
Kartki z Historią Polski i Japonii (日本文化と歴史のカードゲーム)
(Odrodzenie literatury historycznej w literaturze współczesnej)

Wykład tłumaczony symultanicznie na język polski
PRZEGLĄD NAGRODZONYCH PUBLIKACJI 12:30-13:00
KATEGORIE (JAPANEZKI)
Tsunepi Okazaki, 「アラバタチの便り」 i
Ewa Palasz-Rutkowska, *Historia stosunków polsko-japońskich*, t. II: 1945-2019
(Przewodnicząca: Ewa Palasz-Rutkowska, Best publications of the Chair of Japanese Studies:
"Tsunepi Okazaki, Letters from Warsaw and
Ewa Palasz-Rutkowska, History of Polish-Japanese
relations, vol. II: 1945-2019")
Numano Mitsuysoshi, Katarzyna Starucka

PANEL DYSKUSYJNY I 14:15-15:15
Co faszyzuje w obcych kulturach?
Badania japończyzne w Polsce i polonistyczne w Japonii
(What fascinates us in foreign cultures?
Japanese studies in Poland and Polish studies in Japan)
Przewodnicząca: Ewa Palasz-Rutkowska (UW)
Gosia Górska (Instytut Japonistyki UW),
Shiba Riko (Issei Internat UMK), Arkadiusz Jabłoński (UAM),
Agnieszka Kozyra (UW)

PANEL DYSKUSYJNY II 15:45-16:45
Literatura bez granic. Polsko-japońska i
japońsko-polskie przekłady literatury pięknej
(Literature without borders. Polish-Japanese and
Japanese-Polish translations of literature)
Przewodnicząca: Beata Kubaki Ho-Chi (UW)
Gosia Górska (Instytut Japonistyki UW),
Numano Mitsuysoshi (Tokyo University),
Mikołaj Melanowicz (UW), Henryk Lipszyc,
Agnieszka Kozyra (UW), Barbara Stomka,
Iwona Kordzińska-Nawrocka (UW),
Anna Zalewska (UW)

REQUIEM PROJECT CHORI JAPAN 17:00
Prayer for Peace, conductor Ueda Susumu
Old Library
University of Warsaw Main Campus
26/28 Krakowskie Przedmieście St.

Honorowy patronat Ambasady Japonii
100 lat polsko-japońskich stosunków dyplomatycznych



Figure 1. Poster promoting the events marking the 100th anniversary of Japanese Studies at the University of Warsaw. Designed by Maria Żelazny.