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# REPORT

OLGA BARBASIEWICZ

## Researching Japan in the Social Sciences and Humanities: Conference Report <sup>1</sup>

On 24–25 April 2013 at the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw, an international conference entitled *Researching Japan in the Social Sciences and Humanities* was held. The event was organized by the Center for Research on Contemporary Confucianism (CBKW), a research centre at the Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IKŚiO PAN), in conjunction with the Interdepartmental Unit for Migration Research (of the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw), the Institute of Sociology (Warsaw University) and the Kozłowski University. The conference was sponsored by the JAAP–JICA Alumni Association in Poland, supported by the Asia and Pacific Museum in Warsaw. The event also took place under the auspices of the Japanese Embassy in Poland, which organized a reception for the participants and a meeting after the conference in the Japan Information and Culture Center of the Japanese Embassy.

The conference was attended by forty-six speakers from fifteen countries, which allowed the participants to hear over fifty papers presented in two parallel sessions.

At the invitation of IKŚiO PAN, the speeches were given by four keynote speakers: Prof. Yoshio Kawamura from Ryukoku University in Japan, who presented a speech on ‘The socio-economic reality of Japanese agricultural/rural development in the globalizing era’; Dr Izabela Wagner from Warsaw University (UW) introduced the audience to social science issues through her paper ‘The extreme value of extreme cases: Japanese culture’; Prof. Teruji Suzuki from Kozłowski University presented his lecture titled ‘Legal governance’, which examined the influence of the Japanese legal system on East Asian countries; and Kie Kawada, an independent researcher from Japan, who presented the phenomenon of Japanese culinary programs and the specificity of Japanese cuisine in his presentation ‘Japanese cooking through the media’.

Next, sessions concerning issues of the social and human sciences in the context of Japan were held. In the panel on Japanese culture the following speeches were given: Piotr

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<sup>1</sup> The report will also be released in Polish in the journal *Miscellanea Anthropologica et Sociologica*.

Dąbbski from Opole University spoke on 'Film as an unbiased insight into Japanese culture'; Urszula Mach-Bryson from UW ('Symbolism and aesthetics of the Japanese tea garden (*roji*)'); Karolina Bromy-Smenda from UW ('*Enjō-kosai* (compensated dating): a problem of contemporary Japanese society through the reading of the play *Call Me Komachi*'), and Dr Jakub Karpoluk from the Polish-Japanese Institute of Information Technology (PJWSTK) on Japanese *nō* theater.

At the same time, in a session devoted to issues of gender studies, Dr Kyoko Koma from the Mykolas Romeris University in Lithuania introduced *kawaii* culture in the contexts of contemporary Japanese life, in a presentation entitled '*Kawaii* represented in scientific research: the possibilities and problems of *kawaii* cultural studies'; and Nilay Calsimsek from the Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University in Turkey introduced the audience to 'The process of gender identity formation in children's magazines in the Meiji era'.

Other panels offered opportunities to discuss social and economic issues in presentations by Prof. Sunyoung Park from POSTECH, Pohang, Kyungbuk in Korea, who presented the 'Mt. Baekdu expedition of Kyoto University and news media' case; Olga Merkusheva from Moscow State University, on 'Regional policy in post-industrial Japan'; Olga Kotowska-Wójcik from UKSW, who presented 'Mutual inspirations – Japanese and European looks at the insurance area'; Daniela Stella from UKSW, whose work was entitled 'Japanese companies in Poland (1995–2012)'; Justyna Turek from UKSW, on 'Economic relations between the EU and Japan – new challenges and perspectives'; Tomasz Białobrzęski from UW, whose speech was entitled 'The influence of geological structure and constructing buildings on the human sense of security in Japan. The case of seismic hazard in the context of social psychology'; and Dr. Andrea Revelant from Ca' Foscari University of Venice, speaking on 'Economic growth and tax inequality: evidence from World War I'.

On the second day of the conference, Magdalena Piecyk from UKSW considered the issue of '*Kawaii* syndrome – its importance and role in contemporary Japan'; Forum Mithani from SOAS presented the problem of 'Challenging the narrative of the two-parent norm: representations of single mothers in contemporary Japanese television drama'; the Serbian researcher Nevena Stajcic gave a speech entitled 'Understanding culture: food as a means of communication'; and Dr. Cornelia Reiher from MLU Halle-Wittenberg presented the issue of 'Spatial politics of food in contemporary Japan'. Legal science and public policy was represented by Simone Kopietz from Hamburg University, with her presentation entitled 'Candidate recruitment within the DPJ – restrictions of the hereditary system'; Seongjo Kim from the University of Sheffield, with a speech 'The politics of health care retrenchment in Japan after the 1990s'; and Dr. Leon Wolff from Bond University, Gold Coast in Australia, considering the problem of 'Law and popular culture in Japan: a reinterpretation of Japanese attitudes to law and justice'.

Migration issues were presented by Paweł Lewandowski from UKSW, who dealt with 'The most significant consequences of migration for Japan'; and Edyta Bednarek from Łódź University discussing 'Struggle with social exclusion in Japan. The case of the *Buraku* people'. Sino-Japanese relations were examined by Krystian Karolak from Łódź University in his speech on 'Political history and myths in Sino-Japanese relations', and Mariusz K. Krawczyk from Ryukoku University in Japan introduced with great passion his own research titled 'Who is responsible for real estate bubbles? Comparing 1980s Japan and 2000s China'.

The last theme discussed during the conference was Confucianism and international relations. In the first panel a paper was presented by Emil Ciecieląg from John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, entitled ‘The Confucian elements in the book of five rings’, and by Adam Krawiec from the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, entitled ‘The impact of Confucianism on social and business relations in Japan’. International relations were discussed in the following papers: Adam Raszewski (UKSW) on ‘French–Japanese relations in the course of the last decade: chances, threats and prospects’; Alicja Ciszewska from UW on ‘The significance of the trans-Pacific partnership for Japan’; Marta Mickiewicz-Nikodem from Wrocław University on ‘Public diplomacy of Japan’; Dr. Yasunobu Ito from the Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, with a paper entitled ‘The anthropology of business anthropology: investigating ethnographic methods used in the context of business in Japan’, and others.

The conference was summed up during the reception at the Japan Information and Culture Center of the Japanese Embassy by the Japanese Ambassador to Poland, Makoto Yamanaka; Professor Yoshio Kawamura, and Olga Barbasiewicz on behalf of the organizers from IKŚiO PAN. They expressed the hope that a network of links between scientists involved in Japanese issues would be created, and announced further conferences and publications in international cooperation.

## Notes on Contributors

DAVID A D E B A H R, Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich

OLGA B A R B A S I E W I C Z, Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw

ILDIKÓ F A R K A S, Eastern Cultures Institute (Japanese Department) of the Károli Gáspár University of the Hungarian Reformed Church, Budapest

KIE K A W A D A, Independent Researcher from Japan

FRAUKE K E M P K A, Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg

BEATA K O W A L C Z Y K, Institute of Sociology, University of Warsaw

NICOLAS L E V I, Institute of Mediterranean and Oriental Cultures of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw

MARTA L U T Y - M I C H A L A K, Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University in Warsaw

TOMASZ O L E J N I C Z A K, Kozłowski University in Warsaw

PAWEŁ P A S I E R B I A K, Faculty of Economics, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Lublin

MARIO T A L A M O, University of Naples „the Oriental”

IOAN T R I F U, Lyons Institute of East Asian Studies

TINE W A L R A V E N S, Ghent University

LARISA Z A B R O V S K A I A, Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the People of the Far East, FEB RAS, Vladivostok