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THE DEVELOPMENT OF 'JAPAN' IN THE WEST: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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INTRODUCTION

This book is the result of our international research, entitled *The Development of 'Japan' in the West: Comparative Analysis*, supported by the Japan Foundation in 2011-2012.

In 2007 we started analysing images of Japan from several points of view: images of Japan in tradition and modernity; images of Japan in comparison with the Korean case; images of Japan in several media. In this issue, we try to examine images of Japan in several countries and from a diachronic point of view. How have images of Japan been constructed and developed? Have they changed or been consistent?

We are 6 researchers, specialists in image of Japan in several countries, who try to answer these questions through our collective and interdisciplinary research. We touch on several countries' images of Japan in the West: from Europe to America and Australia.

Yoshiko Ikeda presents her argument in *Ambivalent images of Japanese businessmen in American films: From A Majority of One (1961) to Lost in Translation (2005)*, referring to Homi K. Bhaba's notion of "ambivalence" which refers to "a simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action" in his analysis of stereotypes of the Other. She found that the dominant images of Japanese businessmen are negatively constructed in such a way that they defend American self-image, although in the late 1980s and early 1990s, these Japanese images seem not only to defend Americans themselves, but also mask their own anxiety toward themselves. Ikeda explores these contradictory beliefs and conflicting emotions of Americans reflected in the ambivalent images of Japanese businessmen in American films.

Kyoko Koma discusses *Images of Japan seen through the changing reception of Japanese fashion in France*. Fashion has a great role in the formation of identity and the 'identity' of our period is perceived at the intersection of

how I and others look: Koma tries to examine how the ‘identities’ of Japanese women have been constructed through the acceptance of Japanese fashion represented in French media. She found that when Japanese fashion was in vogue in France, the identity of Japanese women tended to be constructed as exotic, ‘immature’ or ‘incomprehensible’, all of which are far from the meaning of *Femme* (‘woman’) in France.

In his paper on *The visual representation of Japan in the West*, Sepp Linhart shows, from point of view of visual studies, or Bildwissenschaft, the possibilities of this new approach in the analysis of representations of Japan, both self-representations and representations from outside. He focuses on two of the most important and strongest images of Japan, Mt. Fuji and the Geisha. By introducing several examples of both images from various visual media, the author shows how these images held in Japan and outside Japan influence each other, and how they are only slowly modified by new developments, so that in the case of Mt. Fuji and the Geisha we can even speak of archetypes of visual representations of Japan.

Clothilde Sabre presents argument on *Neojaponism and pop culture: New Japanese exoticism in France*. Sabre discusses the history of the diffusion of Japanese pop culture in France and analyses the building process of the dream-like images of the country by the fandom of Japanese popular culture, who use their imagination to immerse themselves in an exotic fantasy of Japan. Sabre compares how the work of the imagination (Appadurai: 1996) is in the middle of a process that allows fans of Japanese pop culture to create their own perception of the country, with criticism which asserts that manga is “culturally neutral” (Iwabuchi: 2002).

In *Images of Japan and its people in Australian media*, Adam Windsor examines the construction of the ‘far East’ image of Japan in Australian media from the beginnings of Australian contact with Japan in the second half of the 19th Century up to the present day. The author concludes through his analysis that for a hundred years, representations of Japan and the Japanese in Australian media were dominated by the ‘mysterious’ image of Japan the country, and the ‘invader’ image that borrows from the past.

Aurelijus Zykas analyses ‘Western’ Public Opinion on Japan and its Recent Development on the changing situation of public opinion on Japan, comparing two different periods in three different regions that can be treated as the ‘West’ in Japan’s public diplomacy system: Western

Europe, North America and Australia. The author tries to answer the following questions: what distinguishes the ‘West’ from other regions of the world; what are the differences among the three regions selected; and what are the trends in public opinion over the two last decades in the ‘West’? by presenting the ways in which Japanese public diplomacy deals with increasing challenges from public opinion challenges in the aforementioned regions.

Through our collective research, we could make clear that images of Japan are accumulative: in each period and place, some images of Japan are constructed and remains, and have been diffused as rumour to evoke curiosity, to explain what is Japaneseness through images of Japan, that is, stereotypical images of Japan.

It is often said in foreign countries that Japanese culture is very contradictory: modern and traditional images of Japan are various, from Fuji to Manga, *kawaii* to salary-man, the mysterious to the violent to the incomprehensible – positive or negative in public opinion in the West. However, we could say that this variety is the characteristic of images of Japan. As Takeo Kuwahara, Japanese man of letters, said, cultural phenomena can be compared to a tree: the tree has one part to produce the bloom from its growing branches and leaves, and another part to take nourishment from roots overgrown by the ground. According to Kuwahara, there are three Japanese cultural strata: a layer of Japanese conscience modernised under Occidental influence; a layer of Confucian Japanese culture, such as Japanese traditional warrior culture; a layer of shamanistic culture including elements such as shrine worship (Kumakura 1999: 7-8). If required, we can also devise more detail according to the period. But as these layers already show well, Japanese culture can be considered an acculturated culture. Japanese cultural artefacts from several Japanese layers remain today. It is true that if we look at flowers without knowing strata, these flowers as Japanese cultural artefacts would give impression to foreigners that Japanese culture is not contradictory. But the existence of these flowers as Japanese cultural artefacts could be said to be consistent because they are the flowers of Japanese cultural strata, which are various. Various images of Japan in the West reflect accumulative aspects of Japanese culture. Could it not be said that Images of Japan seen by others has reflected this rapid change?

As Walter Lippman has said, without stereotype, it would be difficult

to contact unknown people. Stereotypes sometimes help us to prepare for such first meetings, while at the same time risking misunderstanding. As researchers in images of Japan, how should we conduct our research?

We hope to show what the images of Japan are in the West, often considered self-evident. We express our sincere gratitude to the Japan Foundation for supporting our research.

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