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Contemporary Japan
Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition

edited by
Paolo Calvetti, Marcella Mariotti

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Contemporary Japan

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Introduction

Paolo Calvetti (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Italia)

This volume is the third of the series *Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies*, a collection of contributions from scholars engaged in common research or debates with the academic staff of Ca' Foscari University of Venice. In particular, the present book is the result of the collaboration between the faculty of the Department of Asian and North African Studies of Ca' Foscari University and several researchers from other international institutions on a project examining various aspects of the contemporary Japanese society during a period of crisis along with other dramatic changes in economic, political, and cultural fields.

In fact, in recent years, as many other developed countries, Japan has faced the rapid changes characterizing the post-global world, *vis-à-vis* the economic crisis, as well as the new geopolitical equilibrium amongst the Asian countries after the economic and military rise of China. Moreover, the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster of March 2011 poses a series of questions about energy management, social solidarity, and emergency management along with the problems of confidence in the national safety system that Japan has had to cope with.

The volume comprises three sections: Japan's International Relations; Cultural Theory, Fine Art and Philosophy; Language and Communication.

In the first section, Steffi Richter, in her contribution *«Kizuna?» Reflection on Japan after 'Fukushima'*, focuses on the energy and nuclear industry, revealing that the 'success story' of Japan accompanying technical progress was not an 'independent' output, but was already a part of global forces since the 1950s. Her study also affirms, that the recent anti-nuclear protests are part of a transnational and transversal acting 'multitude', demonstrating that another kind of *kizuna* (solidarity) does exist.

Alessio Patalano's article *Sea Power and the Geopolitics of Sino-Japanese Security Relations in the East China Sea* deals with the importance of the East China Sea for bilateral interactions between China and Japan. It investigates the strategic role of the East China Sea, how it transformed over time, and how this evolution informed and continues to inform security policy and bilateral relations in more recent times.

Concluding the first section is Andrea Revelant's paper titled *Regional Integration in East Asia: Can Japan Be a Leading Player?* Within the framework of the growing commitment on the part of national governments in East Asia towards regional cooperation for trade, finance and security, the author investigates the institutionalisation of intra-regional relations, with a focus on the role of Japan, in order to assess the country's past achievements, and possible further contributions.

In the second section, a broad variety of topics are presented: Iwabuchi Kōichi's *Re-imagining 'Japan': Beyond the Inter-national Governance of Cultural Diversity* focuses on the re-imagination of Japan as a cultural entity under the emerging governance of an inter-national cultural connection within the process of globalisation in which the national entities are considered as the unit of global cultural diversity. The paper critically explores how Japan, together with other nations, is re-imagined in an exclusive manner in a inter-national global cultural governance. As a counterpoint to this, Toshio Miyake, in his essay *Towards Critical Occidentalism Studies: Re-inventing the 'West' and 'Japan' in Mangaesque Popular Cultures*, deals with the reproduction of the imagined geography of the 'West' in contemporary Japan. He examines Occidentalism, its hegemonic identification and othering process, paying particular attention to emerging Japanese subcultures enacting a parodic and sexualised re-invention of Westernness and Japaneseness.

In her essay *A New Frontier in Art: From Calligraphy to Performance* Rossella Menegazzo analyses the new form of performative acts that recall the instinctive gesture of the *zenga* masters, while also adding at the same time the qualities of new media, technologies and internationalized art trends, and using calligraphy, writing or typographic fonts while exploiting the richness of Asian languages.

Andreas Regelsberger introduces the innovative work of Okada Toshiki, the founder of the theatre company Cheltfish in *Those in Darkness Drop from Sight: Precarity in the Theatre of Okada Toshiki*, analysing the social background of Okada's plays, which are characterized by their strong interest in the so-called 'lost generation' made up of the young Japanese that was hard-hit by the economic crisis following the collapse of the bubble after 1989.

Lastly, Matteo Cestari's contribution *Nihilistic Practices of the Self: General Remarks on Nihilism and Subjectivity in Modern Japan* provides some hints for a critical discussion of the question of nihilism in Japan from a cultural and philosophical viewpoint.

The third section brings together six different contributions all related in a broad sense to the Japanese language. Barbara Pizziconi analyses *Japanese Discourses on Nuclear Power in the Aftermath of the Fukushima Disaster* offering observations on the discursive positioning of various social actors in the weeks and months following the disaster. She argues that the anti-nuclear grassroots movements and the fora of institutional news media and social media, facilitated the reshaping of the whole discursive space surrounding the nuclear as well as blowing up a few myths such as the 'cleanness', 'safety' and 'cheapness' of the nuclear power propaganda.

The focus of Endō Orie's paper, *Earthquakes and Language: Words and Expressions that Resulted from the Tōhoku Earthquake*, is on new Japanese words, in particular onomatopoeia, that came into being after the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and the subsequent Fukushima nuclear disaster. After comparing data from the 1995 Great Hanshin earthquake and 2011 Tōhoku earthquake, Endō comes to the conclusion is that the kind of linguistic output reflects the unique characteristics of each earthquake. One section of the paper deals with new words that were produced as a result of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, and tracks the process causing these words to become fixed in the Japanese language.

The essay on *«Keitai shōsetsu»: Mobile Phone Novels* by Paolo Calvetti is a description of the so called 'mobile phone novels' seen from a linguistic point of view. This article illustrates the specific characteristics of the language used in a selection of *keitai shōsetsu* and is an attempts to understand whether the use of a new writing tool and of a new communication system has modified the language in terms of vocabulary, syntax and orthography.

Aldo Tollini's *An Ancient Writing System for Modern Japanese* deals with 'the adequacy of a writing system to the society it serves'. It is intended to examine how the mixed logophonographic *kanji-kana majiri* writing system presently used in Japan works in modern Japanese society and discover whether if it fulfils its task or whether it causes difficulty in learning.

Japanese Language Learning thorough Authentic Materials by Marcella Mariotti addresses a key issue in Applied Linguistics concerning the limits imposed by copyright laws have on teaching and learning processes using authentic materials. Bearing in mind the fundamental role of shared online materials under copyright as a source and support for students' motivation, the paper reveals the extreme conflict between student practices and Japanese copyright laws.

Concluding the third section is the review article by Patrick Heinrich and Masiko Hidenori titled *Japanese Sociolinguistics: A Critical Review and Outlook*. It provides a critical overview in order to reach a comprehensive understanding of current research trends in Japanese sociolinguistics and the tension between what the author defines as 'mainstream sociolinguistics' and 'interdisciplinary sociolinguistics', while also taking also into consideration the Japanese state ideology which stressing linguistic, cultural and historical unity going back to an ancient past.

For the realisation of this volume and of activities prodromal to the project – in particular, the international conference *Contemporary Japan: Challenges facing a World Economic Power in Transition*, held in Venice in March 2011 – we wish to express our gratitude to The Japan Foundation for its generous support and to all our colleagues, in particular Marcella Mariotti, and to the editorial staff at Ca' Foscari University that made the publication of this work possible.

Japan's International Relations

Kizuna? Reflections on Japan after 'Fukushima'

Steffi Richter (Universität Leipzig, Deutschland)

Abstract Taking up some topics of the speech of the former Prime Minister of Japan, Kan Naoto, about «Kizuna» some weeks before 3/11, I will focus on the following two issues: for a long time, postwar Japan was described as a success story: as a wealthy Middle-Class society, which drew its identity, among others, from the 'home electrification', coming along with technical progress. Such a self-perception of Japan is based on the strict separation of 'We' vs. 'the West'. Since 3/11, however, this myth came to its end. Energy and nuclear industry are excellent topics to become aware of how 'Japan', already since the 1950s, was part of global forces. Since the 1990s, a growing precarity of work and life, in Japan as elsewhere, has stirred new kinds of movement into action, which are interconnected. They are playing an important role in the recent anti-nuclear protests and part of a transnational and transversal acting 'multitude', demonstrating that another kind of «Kizuna» does already exist.

Summary 1. Introduction. – 2. The Third *Kaikoku*: Japan vs. the World Again? – 3. Nuclear Power Plants as a Means of Social Exclusion: Nuclear Labour. – 4. The Nuclear Power Plant Accident: a 'Catalyser' of New Protest Movements. – 5. After 'Fukushima': Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will.

1 Introduction

I first encountered the concept of *kizuna* in *Bonds of Civility. Aesthetic Networks and the Political Origins of Japanese Cultures* (2005) by the historical sociologist Ikegami Eiko. She introduces this concept to find a new perspective for the pre-modern Edo Period in Japan: the emergence of civility and proto-modern relationships in the stable and hierarchically structured state system of Tokugawa (meaning 'strong bonds') can only be understood by simultaneously looking at the 'weak bonds'. In this sense, she means the *kizuna* into which people enter in several places of non-hierarchical artistic activity, thus building diverse (aesthetic) networks. Those networks in turn crossed each other and led to the formation of 'public spheres', where something new could emerge and incur a social change.

When I came across the speech given by former prime minister Kan Naoto at the World Economic Forum at Davos (on 29 January 2011), entitled «Opening Japan and reinventing *kizuna*», my curiosity was immediately piqued. Interpreting *kizuna* as «interpersonal bonds», Kan calls for a «third opening of Japan» to the world, and for the forging of new connections between individuals in Japan itself, in order to create a «society with the least unhappiness». Only a few weeks later, the 'nuclear earthquake disaster' (*genpatsu shinsai*) occurred in Northeast Japan, whereby the *kizuna* evoked by Kan revealed a dramatic new dimension.

Taking up some of the topics in Kan's speech, I will focus my paper on the following two issues: 1. the problem of *kaikoku* (opening of Japan to the world), and 2. the problem of work/labour (*hataraku koto*) as a means «to connect ourselves with society» (Kan) – against the background of the earthquake-tsunami-nuclear power plant catastrophe.

2 The Third *Kaikoku*: Japan vs. the World Again?

For a long time, post-war Japan was described as a success hi/story, based on a relatively homogeneous, increasingly wealthy middle-class society, which drew its identity mainly from 'home electrification', along with technical progress (the so-called 'techno-nationalism'). Well-known keywords in this regard are 'bright life' (*akarui seikatsu*) and 'nuclear family' (*kaku kazoku*). This self-perception of Japan as **the** electronic nation is based not only on the strict separation of 'We/Japan/ese' vs. 'the world/ the West' ('inside' vs. 'outside'), but also on the separation of nuclear weapons and the so-called peaceful use of nuclear power; it also involves forgetting about the indissoluble interdependence between home-electrification, bright life, nuclear family, and nuclear industry. The energy, and, especially, the nuclear industry – a blind spot in Japanese studies so far – is an excellent window revealing how 'Japan' has been part of global political, economic and also cultural forces since the 1950s.

Nevertheless, in Davos, Kan Naoto called for a new *kaikoku*, Japan's third such opening to the world: «During the latter half of the twentieth century, Japan opened up its national economy to the world, and grew into an economic power. However, now in the twenty-first century, there is growing concern in Japan that […] in the midst of its economic stagnation the minds of its people, including the youth, are becoming inward-looking». He went on: «this spirit of opening up the nation [from within] is now called for in Japan. With this belief, this year, I have set 'the Third Opening of Japan' as a grand objective» (Kan 2011).

First, I want to add a critical remark to this view of history: the metaphor of a 'second opening' of the Japanese national economy to the world implies that it was previously closed. However, as a colonial empire, which maintained its power until 1945 through raw materials and human resources from East and Southeast Asia (and which also relocated millions of Japanese people from the homeland to these regions), this is definitely not the case for Japan – neither in economic nor political, military nor cultural terms.

This view runs the risk of forgetting that Japan's path to modernity has been one of «anticolonial colonialism» (Robertson 2001, p. 70), something that must also be taken into account when considering the 'economic miracle' of the post-war era. 15 August 1945 was by no means a 'ground Zero', as we can see in the historiographical concept of the 'transwar' (a concept developed, among others, by Andrew Gordon for social history; Gordon 2003).

For the post-war era, or 'contemporary Japan', Kan distinguishes between the border-crossing economy and a nation that initially tended to open itself up but that has, in recent times, become more inward-looking. However, even this view needs clarification. It is not the 'Japanese economy' in general that has opened itself, but big capital, that is, a few large-scale industries acting transnationally or globally within an infinitely expanding market, which is «not 'out there' somewhere outside Japan, but is spreading within it» (Yoda 2001, p. 642). These industries were, and still are, closely intertwined with centralised politics and state machinery (i.e. 'strong *kizuna*'). The state itself not only advocates the competitiveness of these enterprises, it has also contributed, through educational and other institutions, to the reproduction of an imagined community of 'we Japanese'. This nation considered the *kaku kazoku* and the 'company' (*kaisha*) as its basic social principles, whereby the former was symbolised by the consuming housewife, surrounded by electrical goods 'made in Japan', and the latter was represented by skilled engineers and diligent salary men, who produced these goods in large-scale enterprises such as National, Mitsubishi, Hitachi or Toshiba. These enterprises were among the global players dominating electronics, automotive and machine-building industries – economic branches, which are often seen as equivalent to the branding of 'made in Japan'. But I assume that it is little-known that they were also (and still are) leading actors in another key industry without which the myth of Japan Inc. would not have been possible: the energy and nuclear industry was already part of the global world under the conditions of the Cold War. Since the Fukushima catastrophe, however, this myth finally came to an end.

Let me try to outline the background to these issues by means of some considerations. These very provisional ideas are based on the following premise: as much as the contemporary debate about Fukushima must be embedded into the entire local, national and global history of nuclear energy, Japanese post-war history, whose narration often begins with the atomic bombing, also needs to be extended by the perspective of the so-called 'peaceful use of nuclear energy', and its introduction into Japan.

The first considerations are related to the so-called 'bright life' campaign, launched in the 1950s by the state, in close cooperation with electrical goods companies such as National/Panasonic or Mitsubishi, and rooted in the modern or 'cultural life' (*bunka seikatsu*) movement of the 1920s, making it an example for the transwar-Japan concept. Although contemporary analyses of cultural, social and consumer history all underline the importance of this movement for the modernisation of everyday life, I do not know of any study actually bringing together this development with the introduction of nuclear energy plants in Japan. The first energy plants were planned, introduced and realised by state and politicians in Japan and the USA at the very same time around 1954. The first power plant was commissioned at Tōkaimura in 1966 (for more details, see Yoshimi 2012). In addition, these two developments – the bright life and nuclear energy – are intrinsically tied to the symbolic figure of the 'trifold father' Shōriki Matsutarō (1885-1969): owner of the newspaper *Yomiuri Shinbun* for many years, he founded the first professional baseball team (the Giants in 1934), and is thus considered the 'father of *puro-yakyū*' (professional baseball). He is also considered as having 'fathered' the first private television network (Nihon terebi, which he founded in 1953), and as the 'father of nuclear power' in Japan. Despite having been arrested as a 'Class A' war criminal, he soon worked closely together with the US occupying forces, in order to obtain at least two types of technological know-how: first, for television as new mass media, which not only symbolised the *akarui seikatsu*, but could, at the same time, serve as a means to propagate *akarui seikatsu* as an ideal for the middle class, in order to channel the extremely active worker and union movement in the direction of private consumption. Second, he could obtain the know-how for nuclear energy plants, which were then considered (worldwide!) as the cleanest and most inexhaustible energy resource for all these 'bright life electronic appliances'.

In relation to this is the second idea whereby the term 'nuclear family' as the nodal point of the discursive construct of the 'middle class society' thus acquires another, somewhat ambivalent, complexion. The positive image of the nuclear family is not only linked to the discursive ideal of growing affluence and modernisation of everyday life through comprehensive home-electrification, but also to the ideal of individualisation. My own research into consumer culture history since the 1970s, but also the problematization of the phenomenon of the so-called 'nuclear village' (*genshiryoku mura*), an «interest group of politicians, METI-bureaucrats, energy corporations, nuclear power plant entrepreneurs, construction companies, local communities, scientists and media corporations» (Berndt 2012, p. 27) since the Fukushima disaster, have led me to pose the following questions: has the growing commodification of everyday life, flooded by commodities, not tended to result in an individualisation as a privatisation and atomisation of society? And have public spheres, already subject to drastic changes due to the so-called de-politicisation of the masses, or partial masses, been diminished by the general centralist and technocratic nuclear complex to a 'crypto-public'? (*Kryptoöffentlichkeit*, Mishima 2011, p. 4). Advertising campaigns, exhibitions at nuclear plants, speeches by pro-nuclear industry scientists (the so-called *goyō-gakusha*), corruption, cover-ups and lies have led to an extensive acceptance of the 'security' (*anzen*) myth, and to a feeling of security (*anshin*) with regard to nuclear power in the *kaku kazoku* society. However, at the same time, anti-nuclear activists, who have always been present in Japan, have not only been excluded from the mainstream public, but also discriminated at their workplaces (many of them can be looked up in the 'Anti-nuke who's who' on the homepage of the Citizen's Nuclear Information Center (CNIC, founded in 1975). This consensus between nuclear/electronic appliances goods industries and the *kaku kazoku* society might also be expressed in the following matter of fact: although the atomised individuals, as consumers (in Japan and elsewhere), have the possibility of choosing from an unimaginably wide variety of products from the electronic goods market, they cannot do the same with regards to the energy market, since the commodity of energy and its flux is still dominated by oligopolies such as the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO *Tōden*) and nine others.

3 Nuclear Power Plants as a Means of Social Exclusion: Nuclear Labour

This leads me to my second issue on this topic: the problem of nuclear labour, which is so far still widely unresearched scientifically.

Kan Naoto stated in Davos: «Through working, we connect ourselves with society and secure 'a place to be' and are given 'a role to play'», thus these bonds should be reinvented. Long before the tragedy of 3/11, social reality causes us to reinterpret Kan's words in at least in two respects.

First, the Fukushima disaster shines a bright light on a type of work or worker, previously ignored – except by the aforementioned critics of nuclear energy plants – but without which no single power plant could work: the so-called 'disposable workers' (*tsukaisute-rōdōsha*), or 'nuclear nomads' (*genpatsu jipushī*). *Genpatsu jipushī* was the title of a report published back in 1979 by journalist Horie Kunio on his seven months of undercover activities as a contract worker in three nuclear power plants (NPP) in order to draw attention to the working conditions and perils that are only rumoured to be risky due to the silence of NPP promoters as well as of the workers themselves (Horie 2011). At the end of March 2010, the 18 nuclear plants on the grid had 83,000 employees, about 10,000 of whom were regular salaried workers, but about 73,000 were non-regular (Tabuchi 2011). These statistics show that the number of non-regular contract workers (*shitauke-rōdōsha*) exposed to radiation is higher. This means that nuclear energy is not only not clean and safe (*akarui/anzen*), but that the essence of this industry is exclusion and discrimination. It can only exist in a divided (or unequal) society (*kakusa shakai*), in which the so-called '3-K work', *kitanai*, *kitsui*, *kiken* (dirty, demeaning, dangerous), is done by socially discriminated classes, whether foreigners or Japanese. Of course, this is not an exclusively Japanese phenomenon. According to the latest study for the Federal Republic of Germany, in 2009, the number of regularly salaried employees in Germany's 17 nuclear reactors amounted to 6,000, while the number of temporary employees added up to 24,000 workers, who were also exposed to higher radiation levels than the regulars (Deutscher Bundestag 2011, p. 6). In France, there are about 30,000 'atomic nomads' working in the plants (Krause 2012).

Second, the nuclear industry is actually the one industry showing that this dual structure of labour, and therefore *kakusa shakai*, has always existed throughout the entire post-war history, despite the cultural hegemony gained since the mid-1970s by the image of a relatively homogeneous middle class or nuclear family society. The inclusive strong *kizuna*-like company (*kaisha*) and family (*katei*) are only possible at the cost of the social and symbolic exclusion of certain work and workers, without which this society would not be able to function. *Kaisha* and *katei* – both representing privacy – are spatially connected by a gigantic network of electric private railways and their 'consumerist Meccas', the 'terminal department stores' (*tāminaru hyakkaten*), through which public space degenerates into a transit space. Just consider, for example, Shinjuku in Tokyo: the same place at the west underground exit that offered a common space for thousands of people and folk singers protesting against the Vietnam War and the Japanese American Security Alliance in 1969, and where, until 1996, even homeless could still find shelter, is now a place where there is no room to stay and engage in 'weak bonds' in order to use the public sphere to create new things. The only way out left is to enter a café, and therefore, to consume.

4 The Nuclear Power Plant Accident: a 'Catalyser' of New Protest Movements

Post-3/11 this might all change. On 9 September 2011, a large anti-nuclear-demonstration took place in Shinjuku, preceded by many others in Tokyo and other cities after 10 April, and followed by a large demonstration a week later, on 19 September, when about 60,000 people came together. These actions can be seen as the culmination of a first 'demonstration wave' demanding «No nukes!» (*Genpatsu yamero!*). It was followed by a second wave, the so-called 'hydrangea revolution' (*ajisai kakumei*) in summer 2012, after Premier Noda Yoshihiko announced the restart of two nuclear reactors in Ōi, this time not only calling for «Genpatsu yamero!», but for «Noda yamero!» (Stop Noda!).

Both movements were organised by actors who, even before the catastrophe in March, had sought other bonds in a society that is profoundly conditioned by precarious (and non-regular) work relations, and by the precariousness of life in general. Moreover, this same society has the technological requirements – Twitter, the Internet and social networks – necessary to allow their activities to dispense with organisation structures, rejected as hierarchical and ideologically constricted.

Next I would like to present two such actors: Amamiya Karin, and Matsumoto Hajime with his project 'Amateur Riot' (*Shirōto no ran*), who were involved in two relatively independent networks before their paths crossed in the anti-nuclear demonstrations, leading to joint actions.

Amamiya (*1975), a colourful character attracting attention with her Gothic Lolita fashion, is regarded as an advocate of the New Poor. Once a right-wing punk singer, she now belongs to the so-called 'lost generation'. After being a dropout, she went on to become a bestselling author and a kind of champion of young people living in precarious situations (*purekariato*) (see Field 2009). As well as publishing numerous books on this topic (see, for example, Amamiya 2009), she also covers it in her blogging and other Internet activities. She refuses the standard political labels, and since she has no trust in traditional political organisations, she advocates: «Neither right wing nor left – let us go together to change society in a way that it will become liveable for us» (Amamiya 2008, p. 53). The title of one of her books is *Ikisasero!* (Let us live!, 2007): «Let us live and let us find our own identities!». Her books search for respect and recognition (*shōnin*), for «collectivity and activism amid the loneliness and cynicism produced by neo-liberal callousness» (Field 2009, p. 5), accompanied by a 'commercial appetite': Amamiya sells well.

In addition, I would like to point out another important aspect: Amamiya and her comrades (such as Yuasa Makoto, who has become widely known as the organiser of the *Year-end and New Year Tent Villages for the Homeless Temporary Workers* (*Toshikoshi haken mura*) in 2008-2009, are explicitly acting in an international and transnational context. In fact, resident foreigners living and working in Japan also take part in these activities. Referring to the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels, the 2008 'Lost Generation Manifesto' makes the appeal: «Lost Generation people of all lands unite!» (*Zenkoku no rosujene no shokun! Ima koso danketsu-seyo!*) (Rosu jene 2008, p. 7). And their sound-demos, themed «Mayday for Freedom and Survival» (*jiyū to seizon no mēdē*) and held annually since 2004 (created by the newly established, 'Part-Timer, Arbeiter, Freeter & Foreign Workers' Union', PAFF), are explicitly set in the transnational context of the 'Euro Mayday' movement, which started in 2001 in Milan (Marchart 2011, p. 179).

Act locally and think in global contexts to escape from the globalisation pressure created by capital or oppose it with your own desire is a proposal also made by Matsumoto Hajime (*1974), the initiator of the Do-It-Yourself group 'Amateur Revolt'. Who are these people? Based in Kōenji, not far from Shinjuku, where the above mentioned demonstrations against nuclear energy have been held since April 2011, they run several recycle shops (especially for electric household appliances!) in a shopping street (*shōtengai*), run an internet radio and publish a *Minikomi* magazine. By doing so, they are trying to avert the pressure of consumerism and create an alternative living space to the so-called 'rip-off economy' (*bottakuri keizai*) since 2005 (see also Matsumoto 2008, p. 65). For Matsumoto, recycling, repairing (*shūri*), and reshaping (*kaizō*) gives us the opportunity to enjoy a form of autonomy in dealing with things (*mono ni kansuru jichi*), instead of being directed by them (2008, pp. 66-67). The group also seeks to create a space for self-determined action and communication – even with the other, mostly elderly inhabitants of the quarter, who provide them with closed/abandoned shops for peppercorn rents (thus avoiding demolition and reconstruction of this neighbourhood in Kōenji). Shop number 12 also hosts the 'Underground University' (*Chika Daigaku*), «a non-regular university with non-regular lecturers for non-regular workers», founded in 2008 in the midst of the uproar around the Anti-G8-Summit movement and the cancellation of Antonio Negri's visit to Japan (Hirai 2011). The university addresses topics such as global social unrest and change, but also changes in Japan. Further topics include dignity and recognition of labour – a form of labour that allows for self-fulfilment. Therefore, the group has also been involved in the organisation of the aforementioned 'Mayday for Freedom and Survival' sound-demonstrations from the very beginning.

Since April, the university has also addressed the revolutionary changes in the Middle East and the social uprisings in the West – mostly with a relation to their own, metaphorically and literally 'trembling' society. Similarly to Amamiya, *Shirōto no ran* also acts personally and transnationally beyond Kōenji-Tokyo-Japan. In October 2011, for example, Matsumoto and others went to New York to participate in the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement. The web features a round-table with the group in the *Flying Seminar* of New School-OWS participants, who also bring up similarities and differences between social movements in Japan and the USA (see Goldfarb 2011).

So what is also important here is the transnational network of knowledge. They deal with many authors and concepts that are important for the new protest movements in Europe and North Africa: dignity and appreciation through work, but a work that enables self-determination and self-fulfilment. One can find, of course, a Japanese translation of Hessel Stephan's *Indignez-vous!* (2011; *Okare! Ikidōre!*, 2011), and of the anonymous political essay *The Coming Insurrection* (Unsichtbares Komitee 2010; *Kitaru-beki hōki*, 2010). The questions that arise concern a sense of possibility, which, according to Musil Robert, «could be defined outright as the ability to conceive of everything there might be just as well, and to attach no more importance to what is than to what is not» (1995, p. 10). In fact, the reality that they – and we – are experiencing, is affected by catastrophes resulting from the actions of so-called 'realpolitik' (practical politics) in collaboration with the common sense of the *kaku kazoku* society. However, this common sense is about to be challenged. So the question arises: is another society possible?

5 After 'Fukushima': Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will

Finally, I would like to introduce another voice in the choir of this new protest movement: Karatani Kōjin (*1941), a critic, who lives, thinks and acts both globally and locally, or in other words, an «organic intellectual» (Gramsci) seeking to counter common sense and hegemonic ideas with the practical ambition of superseding the 'Borromean ring' of capital-nation-state (Karatani 2012a). This can be illustrated with Karatani's own theoretical and practical involvement in the recent anti-nuclear protest movement in Japan, an involvement which represents a new relationship between critical knowledge and praxis. Karatani argues, «yes, we can surely change society by rallies, because by taking part in rallies we can make a society where people actively take part in rallies» (2012b, p. 94). Soon after his first participation in a *Genpatsu yamero!*-rally organized by the afore-mentioned *Shirōto no ran*, Karatani related his critical reflections on capitalism directly to the nuclear earthquake disaster. While partly agreeing with Solnit Rebecca, who claims in her book, *A 'Paradise' built in Hell* (2009), that, in the aftermath of disasters, a state of mutual assistance will dominate rather than the expected Hobbesian state of nature (man is a wolf to man), Karatani states, «nonetheless, this state is only temporary», adding that this case is different, «because of the nuclear accident. It has separated people from each other instead of bringing them together. [...] [Solnit also writes] that – if the government interferes – catastrophes will be followed by the Hobbesian state. This happened after the Fukushima nuclear disaster. [...] In a certain sense, radioactive materials equal the state: this equation (radioactivity equals state) drives people apart. Furthermore, Solnit mentions other disasters in addition to natural ones (the collapse of financial systems, etc.), claiming that these catastrophes give rise to political revolutions and social reforms. In this sense, I wonder if the current nuclear disaster might cause a change of Japanese society. And a first step towards that is: 'Let's demonstrate!'» (Solnit 2011a, pp. 16-19).

Although Karatani is known for being sceptical about the possibilities of political protest as a means to overcoming social evils in our societies, he nevertheless puts his hopes in rallies ('demo', or as he has recently called it: 'assembly' (*yoriai/shūkai*) (Karatani 2012b, pp. 100-101). Just another short quotation here: «The reasons why we should decide against nuclear energy have not been newly discovered by this nuclear disaster. They were already evident in the 1950s. Then why have we been so negligent with regard to the construction of nuclear power plants? Although there was no particular enforcement, the situation was such that it had become impossible to be against nuclear power plants. A similar situation concerned rallies – though never prohibited, they could no longer be held. So what is the best way to break through this condition? I have thought about this. I could express many of these thoughts about rallies, but eventually, we first have to go and rally ourselves. Discussions about why we do not hold rallies do not get us anywhere. […] In the end, for the time being, all that matters is to go and to do it: to do *demo*» (Karatani 2011b).

After 3/11, the 'just do something' attitude seems to have become a common ground for both Katarani and many other critics too. To quote Matsumoto Hajime again: «Certainly, *demo* alone cannot change society. I think we have to combine different methods in order to improve society. […] *Demo* can be a movement with explosive powers. […] If you have something to say – out with it. That is why we should just stage *demo* without giving them too much thought. […] Go for it! We can still think about other things afterwards» (Matsumoto 2011, p. 51). The strongest instance for a change of practice is the practice itself – or, as in the case of the Fukushima nuclear-earthquake disaster, an event; although admittedly, this has been an event that has claimed the lives of thousands of people, and that will be taking many more in the future. The importance of an event in creating something new (remember, for example, the self-immolation of the Tunisian street vendor, Bouazizi Mohamed, which sparked the wave of the 'Arab Spring') is described by the sociologist Lazzarato Maurizio in the following terms: «There is something in the event that cannot be reduced to the social determinisms of causal series, in the sense that its conditions do not contain all of its effects. […] Therefore, the event cannot be *completely* deduced from a history from whence it comes and in which it inscribes itself anew». Something is changing, creating «possibilities whose limits are not clearly established. […] The event is an opening, a possibility of self-transformation and, consequently, of changing the socio-political situation. A new universe is opened up and those who cross this threshold can engage in new relations, new modes of thinking and doing, new knowledge and affects» (2011). First, rather **felt** than **conceived**, these possibilities – which many people consider a disruption of their existence – have to generate a language, a new discursive field, as well as new modes of action and organisation. «The event is a source of desires and unknown beliefs in so far as by adding itself to the world, it must measure itself against what is already there and already instituted. The event and its effects add something to the world, and this can change what is already constituted. *Political action entails building the conditions for a transformation of what is, starting from the new possibilities contained in the event*» (2011).

In this sense 'Fukushima' is not just a topic that could somehow prove useful for academic reflections. Rather, it means – and requires – a change of perspective not only in our theoretical and analytical research (mentioned at the beginning of this article), but also regarding the problem of practical use of knowledge. There have always been anti-nuclear movements in Japan during the entire post-war history, and their protagonists have dedicated their life 'to securing a safe, nuclear-free world' by providing reliable information and public education on all aspects of nuclear power to ultimately realise this goal (CNIC – Japanese Citizens Nuclear Information Center) and manifold other activities. But they have been ignored, marginalised, or even suppressed, mainly by the aforementioned 'nuclear village', but also by the majority of the population. Today, however, in the context of global events like the protests in the Arab world (the so-called 'Arab Spring') and also in the Western World ('Occupy'), and thanks to developments in media technology, anti-nuclear protests in Japan have become a powerful factor expressing the will to launch major changes within society. I have just mentioned the CNIC. Since its foundation back in 1975, the centre has been active as a non-profit organisation. After 3/11, however, their staff and researchers were overwhelmed by hundreds of telephone and email requests for information on the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. «The huge demand for reliable, independent information threatened to paralyse CNIC's work» (Liscutin 2011, p. 3). Flooded by requests for information, the centre soon awoke to the possibilities of the aforementioned new, interactive media and communication technologies (Ustream – available since 2010 in Japan; Internet TV, tweets, blogs) and, according to Liscutin, «functioned as a kind of intensive course on nuclear power» for millions of Japanese – but not only – citizens (i.e. new media users). The author emphasises, «that CNIC usually seeks to change Japan's energy policies by way of established political processes and institutions, compared, let's say, to movements such as *Shirōto no ran's No Nukes* or the *Sayonara Genpatsu* network, which aim to challenge the top-down political realities of Japanese democracy as well» (Liscutin 2011, p. 4).

In addition to all the movements and protagonists mentioned so far, I could give many more examples of similar activities. In fact, I have only just started to analyse how their activities are intertwined with actual discourses over new horizons of meaning for social movements. Who is acting in which way, and what intentions do they have; how do they connect with other protagonists – in Japan, on local levels and in the global context? In the context of nuclear energy (either as nuclear weapons or as a nuclear industry), this networking problem is of the utmost importance: the new social and protest movements are opposed by huge powers also acting nationally and trans-nationally, which the philosopher Mishima Ken'ichi once accurately described at a workshop as a «concrete wall of felted interests» (2011). He also expressed very reasonable doubts about the chances of these protests actually achieving anything in opposition to the powers of the «nuclear state» (Jungk 1991) or of the 'nuclear village'.

To conclude this article: with all due respect to the necessary «pessimism of the intellect», it is these protest movements that stand for the «optimism of the will» (Gramsci 1920), and that is why I think it is important to take these movements into even more closer consideration.

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Sea Power and the Geopolitics of Sino-Japanese Security Relations in the East China Sea

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Abstract Disputed maritime boundaries are unlike their land equivalent. The oceans and seas of the world represent de facto an empty, border-less continuous global space where access and mobility determine the degree to which naval forces can exert control. In the East China Sea, however, Sino-Japanese disputes over their maritime borders are intertwined with questions of territorial ownership. There, issues of continental and maritime strategy are drawn together by the inhabited Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands. There, territorial ownership matters because it has the potential to affect access and mobility and with it, control of the sea and its resources. This paper examines the strategic dimension of the Sino-Japanese territorial disputes over the Senkaku/Diaoyutai Islands one year after September 2010 collision between the Chinese fishing trawler and the cutters of the Japan Coast Guard and how the ability to claim sovereignty over the islands has a specific political and emotional value for both countries. Ultimately, the extent to China and Japan can develop common ways to access and exploit the maritime realm as a way to defuse tensions over the disputed ownership is evaluated.

Summary 1. Introduction. – 2. The Geopolitics of a 'Maritime System'. – 3. The Politics of the Sino-Japanese Maritime Disputes. – 4. The Strategy of Continental and Maritime Powers? – 5. Conclusions.

1 Introduction

The People's Republic of China (PRC, hereafter China) and Japan are connected to each other through the East China Sea (ECS).[1] Historically, the waters of this basin acted both as a connecting fabric and a dividing wall between the two countries. Today, the ECS remains an important space of bilateral interaction but its significance to Sino-Japanese relations expanded as a result of the widening of the two countries' maritime interests. For China and Japan, the main sea routes crossing the ECS offer vital arteries for trade and energy imports. Fish stocks and natural resources are invaluable for food and energy requirements. Its waters constitute

1 For a definition of the limits of the East China Sea, see International Hydrographic Organization 1953, p. 31.

a main staging platform for the deployment of capabilities to defend (or claim) national territories as well as for the projection of power (soft and hard) and influence in the region and beyond.[2]

This chapter investigates the strategic importance of the ECS to China and Japan, how this transformed over time, and how this evolution informed and continues to inform security policy and bilateral relations. In terms of analytical framework, scholarship on sea power has pointed out that any strategic assessment of a theatre where the sea is a primary systemic factor has to be carried out by bearing in mind the attributes relative to the use of the sea. First, the sea is the single largest connecting highway in the world. This defines three of its core features: as a medium of transportation, as a space that has facilitated the spread of ideas, and a realm for dominion. The fourth attribute concerns the richness of life characterising the sea and making it also a precious resource in itself (Till 2004, pp. 16-18). The identification of its attributes is important because, according to experts on sea power, some of the uses of the maritime realm are regarded as favouring cooperative forms of behaviour, others are considered to lead towards competition (Till 2004, p. 7).

How do these characteristics affect Sino-Japanese relations in the ECS? The chapter firstly reviews the centrality of the ECS as a maritime system to the Chinese and Japanese economies. It further examines this dimension by connecting it to one of the main security issues in Sino-Japanese relations: the disputes over their maritime borders and over the sovereignty of a group of inhabited offshore island features, the Senkaku (Diaoyudao in Chinese) Islands. The chapter goes on to investigate Chinese and Japanese maritime strategies in relation to the ECS, focussing on how strategic planners in both countries are seeking to meet the requirements of their respective security agendas.

2 The Geopolitics of a 'Maritime System'

From the viewpoint of Sino-Japanese relations, the ECS is a 'maritime system'. French historian Fernand Braudel considered a maritime system as one in which the sea is the main medium for the spread of ideas, for commercial opportunities and for the projection of military power and political influence. Whilst the core of his research work focused on the Mediterranean Sea, he also looked at 'the maritime Far East' pointing out that since ancient times sea-routes had helped the formation of a network

2 In the ECS, there are a series of maritime disputes involving China, Japan, the Republic of China (hereafter Taiwan), and the Republic of Korea. This chapter does not engage with the entire set of disputes, and it relies on existing scholarly work for a wider treatment of the subject. See Valencia 2007.

of adjacent, interconnected sea basins (Braudel 1996). They linked the littorals of Southeast Asia to the shores of Northeast Asia by means of 'epicontinental seas, hemmed in by nearby land'. These semi-enclosed maritime spaces, including the South and East China Seas, the Yellow Sea, and the Sea of Japan, constituted a web of 'Mediterraneans', all 'surrounded by land and dotted with islands'. Within them, fishing was a vital activity for communities living along the coasts, contributing to the flourishing of civilisation; across them, navigation was on a scale that favoured their use for trade and commerce (Braudel 1995, p. 256).[3]

Braudel's description of the role of the ECS in regional interactions holds true today. Over the past five decades, its waterways have been essential to the industrial growth of regional economies, facilitating intra-regional exchanges as well as regional interdependence with the global economy.[4] In 2009, the top five world trade routes originated in East Asia, accounting for more than a quarter of the total shipping traffic of the top twenty world maritime arteries (cf. World Shipping Council s.d.2). In the 2002-2011 period, Japan maintained a consistent second place in the top five countries with the world's largest maritime fleets, whilst China emerged in fourth place, and the Republic of Korea (ROK) rose to fifth position in 2009.[5] In 2010, seven of the world's top ten container ports were in East Asia, with the port of Shanghai in the East China Sea in holding a strong first place, handling 29.07 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs). In fact, this is almost a third more TEUs than the total number of TEUs handled by the first two non-Asian ports in the list, Dubai and Rotterdam, put together.[6] Data on the market share of East Asian actors in world trade by value further suggest that this region's importance is increasing also in terms of its value as a percentage of the world total. In 2009, China's share in world trade equalled 7.98% of the total, Japan stood at 4.37%, and the ROK at 2.56%. In comparative terms, these data are very similar to those of France (4.37%), Germany (7.37%), and the UK (3.81%) («Review of Maritime Transport» 2011, pp. 209-213).

Growing energy imports are the single most important reason for the sharp rise in regional traffic. Japan, Korea and China account altogether for more than a quarter of the world oil demand. For Japan, import of energy resources is a longstanding feature of its economic outlook. As of 2010,

3 Braudel's conclusions were recently reviewed and expanded in Gipouloux 2009.

4 This point is explained in detail in Pelletier, Thébault, Collectif 2009, pp. 310-312.

5 In 2009, Japan ranked first in the classification, whilst Hong Kong is counted separately from the rest of China. If the data were to be calculated together, China would have taken a stable third position for the entire period. UNCTAD 2001-2011.

6 In the year 2010, these two ports handled 11.60 and 11.14 million TEUs, respectively. See World Shipping Council s.d.1.

imports of mineral fuels amounted to almost 30% of Japan's total imports, with crude oil alone accounting for half of the energy share.[7] Northeast Asia is projected to become the largest oil market over the next few years, with imports of 94% from the rest of the world (Lai 2009b, pp. 3-5). China accounts for the lion's share in terms of impact on energy imports. In 2003, the country overtook Japan as the largest Asian oil importer, becoming the second largest in the world. Consumption of oil went from 88 million tons in 1980 to 368 million tons in 2007, of which 203 million tons of crude and oil products were imported, up 6% from 2006 (Lai 2009a, p. 28). In 2008, Chinese oil imports rose to 941,342 barrels per day, with a 3.76% increase in total consumption compared to the year 2007 (cf. US Energy Information Administration, country profile: China). According to recent reports, in 2011, China imported 6% more crude oil than in 2010 («China's Oil Imports Rise 6% in 2011» 2012).

The ECS is not only a crucial transit area for energy resources. Its seabed is thought to contain vast untapped reserves of hydrocarbon resources that would be invaluable to China and Japan, countries with heavy energy demands and substantial import dependence from the Middle East.[8] A 1969 survey compiled by the Coordinating Committee for Offshore Prospecting in Asia (CCOP), under the aegis of the UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), was the first to document the presence of such reserves.[9] These conclusions were confirmed by subsequent studies conducted independently by Japanese and Chinese research teams. According to a 2005 conference report on petroleum resources in the ECS, Chinese estimates of gas reserves range from 175 trillion to 210 trillion cubic feet in volume, whilst foreign assessments of oil reserves are as high as 100 billion barrels. Chinese exploration of the Xihu Trough indicated 'proven and probable' gas reserves for some 17.5 trillion cubic feet, whilst the Chunxiao reserves are estimated to be about 1.8 trillion cubic feet. In terms of oil, the Okinawan Trough is believed to possess the richest concentration of petroleum deposits, though these are made less accessible by the depth of the Trough (7,000 feet deep). The seabed around the Senkaku/Diaoyudao Islands is similarly rich in petroleum deposits, estimated by the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to be well over 94.5 billion barrels (Harrison 2005, pp. 5-6).

7 JETRO, available at `http://www.jetro.go.jp/en/reports/statistics/`.

8 On the evolution and implications of China's oil imports policy, see Kennedy 2010.

9 The CCOP was set up in 1966 by China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and the Philippines under the auspices of the United Nations to conduct scientific research related to coastal and offshore areas with respect to geological/geophysical surveys, regional map compilations, and database development. In 1987, it became an independent intergovernmental organization, and in 1994, its name was changed to Coordinating Committee for Coastal and Offshore Geoscience Programmes in East and Southeast Asia. Information about the CCOP is available through its official website `http://www.ccop.or.th/`.

Taken altogether, sea transportation, trade, and natural resources all contribute to making the maritime realm of the ECS a prominent item in Beijing and Tokyo's political agendas. Indeed, economic data from the past two decades suggest that the engines of Chinese economic development have grown increasingly dependent on access to the maritime realm, and that the ECS represent the main gateway to economic growth. Sea routes have become the lifelines for the distribution of Chinese trade and manufacturing in the region and beyond, as well as the crucial arteries for oil imports to fuel the Chinese industrial core. More recently, the confirmed presence of untapped resources in the seabed of the ECS added to the economic relevance of this theatre to national security. With the maritime realm gaining centre stage, so did questions on the ability to gain secure access to its resources. This, in turn, prompted Chinese and Japanese political authorities to engage with each other over unresolved maritime and territorial disputes.

3 The Politics of the Sino-Japanese Maritime Disputes

It is worth pointing out here that there are, in fact, two different types of dispute between China and Japan in the ECS. The first concerns sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands; the second concerns the demarcation of the maritime borders between the two countries, and the consequent delimitation of their exclusive economic zone (EEZ) as defined by the United Nation Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). This distinction is important because sovereignty over a piece of land is different from sovereignty over parts of the sea. The former is connected to vital national interest and historically, has represented a primary reason for war (Holsti 1991). The latter focuses on functional rights over bodies of water included in the EEZ, not on the actual 'ownership' of the maritime realm. As a result, coastal states must, for example, allow freedom of passage and transit to foreign vessels within their EEZ.

In terms of territorial sovereignty, Chinese authorities tend to emphasise the country's 'historical rights' over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, though the Chinese Foreign Ministry only raised the issue of their formal ownership at the end of December 1971. What raises questions about this first claim is the timing, since it came shortly after Japan and Taiwan had started talks on joint explorations of energy resources around the islands. The initiative sought to take advantage of the findings of a United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) report pointing out the presence of vast untapped natural resources (Drifte 2008, p. 6). The claim was based on historical and legal arguments relating to prior discovery and use, and to the cession of the islands as part of the 1895 Shimonoseki Peace Treaty and their consequent return at the end of World War II.[10] The Japanese argue that they incorporated the islands in the Okinawa Prefecture before the signing of the treaty on 14 January 1895, after a series of surveys of the islands ascertained that they were inhabited and that there was no trace of Chinese control. As a result, they were not to be included with the territories (such as Taiwan) ceded by China with the treaty.[11] This position would be indirectly confirmed by the fact that from 1945 to 1972, the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands were occupied by the United States as part of the Ryūkyū Islands, and they were returned to Japan when the occupation ended.

On this point, whilst the United Sates remains neutral to the dispute itself, it considers the islands to fall under the Article 5 of the 1960 bilateral Treaty, committing itself to defending territories under Japanese administration in case of attack (Valencia 2007, pp. 154-155). This position was repeated in 2004 and again in 2009, and on both occasions these clarifications were prompted by Chinese maritime actions in the proximity of the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands. Regularly scheduled patrols of US warships in the ECS – in areas not too far from the disputed islands, as well as bilateral training exercises further contribute to underlining this point. In December 2010, a little more than two months after a collision in the vicinity of the Senkaku/Diaoyudao Islands involving a Chinese fisher boat and two Japanese coast guard cutters, Japanese and American forces conducted a very large-scale exercise. This was an event usually held every year as part of US-Japan exercises, involving approximately 34,000 Japanese and 10,400 American personnel, a total of some 400 aircraft, and 60 warships. The exercise was nonetheless a powerful visual reminder of the deterrent nature of the alliance, including a variety of scenarios, notably sea and air operations for the defense of Japanese offshore islands (Japan Ministry of Defense 2011, p. 279).

Notwithstanding the 1971 claim, until the beginning of the 1990s, Chinese authorities took little initiative to settle the dispute. In 1972, Zhou Enlai specified to Prime Minister Tanaka Kakuei that he did not have the intention of dealing with the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands (Drifte 2008, p. 7). Again in 1978, when asked by Japanese counterparts to recognise the country's sovereignty over the islands, Deng Xiaoping explained that «it does not matter if this question is shelved for some time, say 10 years. Our next generation […] will certainly find a solution acceptable to all» (Fravel 2010, p. 157). In 1992, this state of affairs changed with the promulgation of a Law of the People's Republic of China on its Territorial Waters and their

10 The Treaty was signed at the end of the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895). See Drifte 2008, p. 7. For an in-depth examination of both legal arguments, cf. also Valencia 2007, pp. 152-157.

11 *Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan* http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/senkaku/senkaku.html.

Contiguous Areas. In this law, disputed areas such as the South China Sea and the Senkaku/Diaoyudao Islands were specifically referred to as part of the country's territorial space. According to some reports, there was no reference to the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands in the first draft of the document, but these were added at the request of the Chinese military top brass (Drifte 2008, p. 11). In subsequent years, Chinese military activities around the islands seemed to confirm a change of attitude towards the dispute. In 1999, Chinese military vessels conducted their first manoeuvre in the waters south the islands (Drifte 2008, p. 24). In 2008, two vessels from the China Maritime Surveillance, under the responsibility of the State Oceanic Administration, entered the territorial waters of the islands in a clear attempt to strengthen Chinese claims (Drifte 2014). In November 2010, shortly after the September incident, the Yuzhen 310 – a large 2,500 ton patrol boat from the Fisheries Law Enforcement Command (FLEC) – made its maiden voyage in the vicinity of the same waters. In August 2011, patrol and information gathering aircraft flew as near as 50 km from the airspace over the islands (NIDS China Security Report, p. 26).

The second dispute concerns the delimitation of the Sino-Japanese maritime borders, and of their respective EEZ. This particular type of dispute falls under the wider process of 'territorialisation' of the maritime realm prompted by UNCLOS. Originally concluded in 1982, UNCLOS came into force in 1994 with the aim of empowering littoral states with the right to manage and exploit maritime spaces adjacent to their coasts. UNCLOS did so in three ways. It extended a coastal state's territorial waters from 3 to 12 nautical miles from their baseline along the coast. It established an EEZ that extended from the edge of the territorial sea out to 200 nautical miles from the baseline, enabling the coastal state exclusive exploitation rights of all natural resources within it. It similarly defined a state's continental shelf as the natural prolongation of a state's land territory to the continental margin's outer edge. This could extend up to a maximum of 350 nautical miles and give the coastal state exclusive rights over all mineral and non-living materials in the subsoil or attached to it.[12]

In the ECS, the application of these definitions proved problematic since the distance between China and Japan is only about 360 nm at its widest point, and the convention does not give specific details as to how overlapping EEZs and continental shelf claims should be resolved. In this case, Japan proposed the application of the equidistant approach, with a 'median line' between Japanese and Chinese coast to be used as the main parameter to demarcate national maritime rights. China disagreed with this approach insisting for the use of the principle of the prolongation of the continental shelf. Through this principle, Chinese authorities argued that the country's

12 For the text of the convention, see *Oceans and Law of the Sea*.

claims would extend to an area extending up to the Okinawa Trough – well within the 350 nm limit. The Japanese argument against the application of this principle rested on the consideration that the Trough should be regarded as a dent in the continental shelf. Unsurprisingly, the median line approach favours Japan – setting the Senkaku/Diaoyudao Islands within the country's maritime area, whilst the continental shelf favours China. Similar disagreements between the two governments apply to the legal status of the atoll of Okinotorishima and the Senkaku/Diaoyudao Islands themselves.[13] As far as the status of the latter is concerned, until recently Chinese authorities did not take official position as to whether they regard the group of islands as capable of generating maritime sovereign rights beyond the 12 nm territorial zone and 12 nm of CZ (Valencia 2007, pp. 153-154).

Today both types of dispute are receiving considerable attention from political authorities in Beijing and Tokyo. Issues of sovereignty seem to walk hand in hand with issues of economic advantage and maritime sovereign rights. Yet the two are not the same. In the dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyudao Islands, the question of their ownership speaks to the ability of government authorities in China and Japan to meet the requirements of a vital function of state institutions. In the border demarcation issue, economic considerations of access to navigation and exploitation of resources seem to be crucial. In the case of the latter dispute, in the recent past, Chinese and Japanese authorities proved to be capable of cooperative forms of behaviour, disagreements notwithstanding. In 2008, the lack of a settlement over the border dispute did not prevent an arrangement to explore the joint development of gas fields in the Chunxiao Gas Field (known in Japanese as the Shirabaka Gas Field).[14]

In the case of the island dispute, the sensitive nature of the territorial ownership was, and continues to be a major source of bilateral tension. The latest example is the 16 April 2012 announcement by the controversial governor of Tokyo, Ishihara Shintarō, to buy three of the Senkaku/Diaoyudao Islands – Uotsuri, Kita-Kojima, and Minami-Kojima. This action forced the Japanese government to step in to buy the islands in September («Japan Government» 2011). This, in turn, provoked violent reactions in China, with weeks of protests in the country's major cities, the deployment of surveillance vessels in the waters around the islands, and a seri-

13 This Okinotorishima atoll, located some 1,700 km to the east of Tokyo, is considered by Japan as an island – and therefore capable of generating EEZ rights – a notion rejected by the Chinese authorities. In China, this coral reef is considered as a set of rocks falling under Article 121 of UNCLOS, rocks that cannot sustain habitation or economic life and as a result, that do not generate EEZ or claims based on the principle of the continental shelf (Fravel 2010, p. 147).

14 For a detailed an analysis of the agreement and of its implications, see Manicom 2008.

ous disruption in diplomatic and economic relations.[15] At one point, senior economic advisors in China voiced threats of a 'trade war' against Japan (Evans-Pritchard 2012). In a year of leadership transition in China and of political fragility in Japan due to the ruling party's loss of public support, neither government authority could afford to be seen as treading lightly on such a sensitive issue.

4 The Strategy of Continental and Maritime Powers?

The recent evolution of the ECS as a space of economic and political interaction had a major impact on the Japanese, and especially the Chinese approach to its strategic relevance to national security. In the case of China, this change was directly connected to the creation of a modern, capable naval force. Indeed, in 1992, General Secretary Jiang Zemin pointed out, for the first time, that the roles of the navy were to expand beyond the defense of the sovereignty and unity of the country to create «a safe and stable environment for the nation's economic development» (as quoted in Cole 2001, p. 169). In 2004, shortly after his appointment as chairman of the Central Military Commission, Hu Jintao further confirmed this trajectory. The sovereignty of territorial seas as well as the protection of China's expanding maritime rights and interests were central elements underpinning the navy's expanding capabilities (Erickson, Collins 2012). As he more recently put it, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) had to speed up «its transformation and modernisation in a sturdy way, and make extended preparations for warfare in order to make greater contributions to safeguard national security» («Hu Jintao Tells China Navy» 2011).

Until the second half of the 1980s, however, the ECS was outside the scope of Chinese naval strategy and way beyond the reach of the PLAN. Naval strategy encompassed sea denial within what would be defined today as China's contiguous zone, and it was based on the concept of the 'near-coast defense' (Li 2011, p. 111). This notion focused on the defense of China's 18,000 km coastline. Especially after the second half of the 1960s, fears of a Soviet offensive against the country's maritime flank underscored the tasks entrusted to the navy.[16] In this context, the service had to prevent amphibious landings intended to seize key straits, islands and strategic assets by sea. In view of the weaknesses of Chinese naval capabilities, naval operations did not seek to cover the entire coastline, they focused instead on three crucial points of transit: the Strait of Bohai, the Strait of Taiwan,

15 «China Sends Patrol Ships» 2012; Perlez 2012; Fackler 2012.

16 Throughout the 1970s, the Pacific grew to become the largest of the four Soviet fleets, and its operations increased in depth reaching to the Indian Ocean (Polmar 1983, pp. 20-21).

and the Strait of Qiongzhou. The first strait was pivotal to accessing Tianjin and China's political heart, Beijing; the second Strait was related to the defense of the Chinese east coast and Taiwan; while the third was crucial to the security of Hainan and China's south coast. The establishment of the three North, East, and South Sea Fleets was instrumental for the implementation of the near-coast defense concept with platforms with limited operational range (Li 2011, pp. 111-112).

By the mid-1980s, the progressive decline of the Soviet threat, and the introduction of major economic reforms by Deng Xiaoping prompted Chinese naval planners to set forth a new 'near-seas active defense' strategy. Masterminded by Admiral Liu Huaqing, one of the service's most influential figures and a close political associate of Deng, this notion had been developed with the intention of departing from the premises of the existing doctrinal grammar (Li 2011, p. 116).[17] It was designed with the intention to emancipate the navy from an ancillary role in the support of land operations and to give it greater 'strategic independence'. In it, the navy was portrayed as taking a stronger leading role in dealing with a variety of increasingly important security issues. The progressive resolution of border disputes on land offered a good opportunity to put the spotlight on similar issues of territorial integrity and sovereignty at sea – from the reunification with Taiwan to the protection of lost and disputed maritime territories. Similarly, the PLAN submarine force had a crucial mission in providing a credible strategic deterrent (Li 2011, pp. 116-118). In the near-seas active defense, the navy also attempted something unprecedented in its short history. It laid the intellectual foundations necessary to link its existence to the security of Chinese economy by presenting its roles in relation to the security of sea-lanes, energy and maritime resources – all vital components of the country's economic reforms.

For this reason, the strategy had to move away from an operational grammar of sea denial around key strategic points of the Chinese coast. It posited the doctrinal conditions for the pursuit of capabilities to seek sea control within a wider maritime area, to be achieved with a progressive expansion in two consecutive areas, later known as the First and Second Island Chains. The former encompassed the space of the 'near seas', the Yellow, East and South China Seas. The latter stretched further out to include the Kuriles, the Bonins, the Marianas, and the Carolines. Sea control capabilities in the area encompassing the near seas represented the first phase of expansion, and they were to be achieved – according to the Admiral – by the end of the cen-

17 For a characterisation of Admiral Liu Huaqing's vision and its impact on the PLAN, cf. Cole 2010, pp. 174-178. In matters of military policy, a recent biography of Deng Xiaoping further reinforced the idea that he considered Admiral Liu a close friend and a trusted political ally, appointing him to the Central Politburo Standing Committee of the Communist Party. See Vogel 2011, pp. 685-687.

tury. To date, notwithstanding recent pronouncements about the intention to move into the second island chain and further out into 'far seas', the PLAN is still striving to enjoy the capabilities for full implementation of the near seas active defense strategy (Li 2011, p. 129).[18] In fact, in the ECS – where countries like Japan, the Republic of Korea and the United States deploy modern and sophisticated naval forces, the Chinese navy is estimated to be currently looking at a form of robust sea denial, also known as an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) strategy, as it continues towards modernisation and procurement of enhanced capabilities (Erickson, Collins 2012, p. 4).

The ECS featured prominently in the near-seas active defense strategy. In Admiral Liu's writings, this maritime theatre was given a primary emphasis since the missions to be carried out across its waters encompassed all the functions justifying the reconsideration of the navy's role in national security. Three sets of issues underpinned the navy's case, and over the past two decades, each of them seems to have gained increasing attention. First, the near-seas strategy made it clear that the PLAN stood at the forefront of the prevention by force of Taiwan's *de jure* independence. This became particularly evident after the 1996 crisis that saw the United States deploy two carrier battle groups in the vicinity of the strait. This incident reinforced the navy's call to procure capabilities to prevent this kind of intervention (Cole, pp. 148-149).[19] Second, the new strategy highlighted the navy's function guaranteeing the security of Chinese territorial claims over disputed islands such as the Senkaku/Diaoyu, as well as of the country's EEZ. In both cases, the existence of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force (JMSDF), featuring capabilities that enabled it to implement a degree of sea control within the theatre, and of the similarly capable Japan Coast Guard, represented reason enough to support Chinese concerns about the procurement of enhanced capabilities. Thirdly, the new strategy explored the question of sea-lanes defense, and how naval modernisation went hand in hand with the protection of the Chinese economy. In 1993, China became a net oil importer, and dependence on imported raw and energy resources, and on maritime trade to sustain development increased exponentially. This presented the PLAN with an additional opportunity to link naval strategy, military capabilities and national security (Fravel, Liebman 2011).

According to one specialist, the navy's plea for greater strategic independence in the near seas, notably in the East and South China Seas, did not fall on deaf ears. From 2000 to 2010, the PLAN modernised its pennant

18 A full review of the debate about Chinese naval modernisation is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, a good assessment of its latest evolution is summarised in Fravel, Taylor M. 2012.

19 Among the effects on the build-up of Chinese capabilities, the 1995-96 crises delayed the aircraft carrier project to favour the procurement of denial capabilities (Erickson, Denmark, Collins 2012, p. 18).

list, and it has a twenty-first century 'credibility in all warfare areas' well in sight (Cole 2010, p. 113; Ross 2009; Qi 2006). Another authoritative assessment struck a similar cord pointing out that the fleet review held in Quingdao in April 2009 to celebrate the PLAN's 60th anniversary represented a powerful visual reminder of its coming-of-age as a modern force and of its intention to project power beyond national shores (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2010, p. 377). In this regard, three areas of naval warfare stand out as symptomatic of the military edge that China is pursuing in the ECS. In submarine warfare, the Chinese made remarkable progress, and today's fleet includes top-end spectrum assets, like the 12 Russian-produced Kilo SSKs, with stated performances comparable to those of equivalent platforms in western navies. Other conventionally-powered submarines like the domestic-produced Yuan class are said to be designed with the option of fitting Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) systems. These would enable the boats to reduce noise signature and enhance operational endurance, ideal characteristics for operations around the Straits of Taiwan and in the proximity of the Ryūkyū Islands – at the borders of the space included in the first island chain (Office of Naval Intelligence 2009, pp. 21-23).

In contrast to China, where the ECS made its first appearance in the PLAN's doctrinal reassessment of the 1980s, in Japan, the strategic significance of this theatre was debated in naval circles as early as the mid-1960s. At the time, three factors underscored the evolution of Japanese defense policy. Domestically, high economic growth rates, and the prospect of a wider maritime area to defend with the reversion of the Ogasawara and Ryūkyū Islands prompted civilian and naval planners to engage with the question of the country's defense posture beyond the Sea of Japan in the ECS. By the end of the decade, a third external factor had to be taken into account: the potential military reconfiguration of US forces in East Asia as expressed in the 1969 Nixon doctrine.[20] Against this background, in the ECS, the Japanese navy decided to focus on the defense of the country's vital maritime arteries. The service evaluated contingency plans to protect trade along two main 'sea route zones', southwest and southeast of Japan's principal maritime Pacific hubs. The 'southwest route', which was 150 nm (270 km) wide, extended along the sea lanes through the Ryūkyū Islands and the Nansei Shotō towards the Bashi Channel for 840 nm (1,512 km) while the 240 nm-wide 'southeast route' moved from the Ogasawara/Bonin Islands to a point north of Guam for 1,000 nm (Sadō 2006, p. 146; Graham 2006, p. 101).

Territorial defense was still a core mission of the JMSDF. Yet, throughout the 1970s, the expansion of the potentially hostile Soviet fleet in the Pa-

20 For an in-depth analysis of the evolution of Japanese naval strategy in the post-1945 period, see Patalano 2009, chap. 5.

cific – with new forays as far as the Indian Ocean – confirmed the safety of trade as a strategic priority. In particular, the navalist argument rested in part on the consideration that a Soviet *guerre de course* against Japanese shipping was not covered by Article 5 of the 1960 US-Japan Security Treaty, and, therefore, did not in principle oblige the United States to intervene (Sekino 1971). This strategic approach was not without its detractors, but when the National Defense Programme Outline (NDPO), Japan's main Cold War policy document, was adopted in 1976 sea lanes defense was eventually embraced as a core feature of the national military posture (Kaihara 1982, pp. 130-131). In 1977, the Director General of the Japan Defense Agency confirmed this commitment in a testimony before the House of Councillors, pointing out that the conditions existed to exercise the right of self-defense along important sea lanes within 1,000 nm around Saipan to the southeast, and Taiwan to the southwest (Graham 2006, p. 118).

For the remainder of the Cold War, the security of the ECS was pre-eminently – but not exclusively – a question of trade routes defense. Operationally, this involved a combination of mine counter-measures (MCM) and surveillance activities in the archipelago's three main straits (Sōya, Tsugaru, and Tsushima – the latter representing the primary entry point of the ECS), and regular patrols «in the sea areas of several hundred miles surrounding Japan» (Japan Defense Agency 2003, p. 180).[21] Restrictions on Japanese defense budgets meant that the control of the waters of the ECS was to be achieved by maximising the combined effect of underwater sound surveillance systems, submarines, maritime patrol aircraft, and an ASW-focused surface force. For this task, fleet target goals listed approximately 60 major surface units, 16 submarines, and some 220 aircraft (Japan Defense Agency 1977, pp. 64-65). The main efforts were directed against the Soviet submarine fleet, estimated by the end of the 1970s to include a force of 125 boats, almost half of them nuclear-powered, ideally suited to conducting raiding activities to harass Japanese shipping.

Throughout the decade and a half that followed, the evolution of the role of the ECS in Japanese strategy followed the wider changes of the Japanese defense posture. During this period, two policy reviews – a new NDPO in 1995, and a National Defense Policy Guideline (NDPG) in 2004 – were conducted to accommodate major domestic and international changes. In Japan, the defense posture was reviewed with an eye to the effects of a prolonged economic stagnation, and of the political transition following the end of the decades-long dominance of the Liberal Democratic Party at the helm of the government. Internationally, a series of security crises in the Middle East, in Africa, and Central Asia engendered a debate about Japan's

21 As explained in the Japanese defense white paper, in case of crisis, sea-lanes were to be established and maritime operation would extend to 1,000 nm in the areas of Japanese maritime traffic – which included the ECS.

military contribution to international affairs. Across the East Asian region, the vacuum left by the disappearance of the Soviet threat was promptly filled in by increasing concerns about China's military modernisation and tensions across the Strait of Taiwan, on the Korean peninsula, and over the disputed maritime boundaries and off-shore islands in the ECS.[22] As a result of the ensemble of these circumstances, Japanese strategic planners had to meet the challenge of facing increased responsibilities with reduced equipment.

The ECS was at the centre of this expansion of duties. Two incursions of North Korean 'suspicious ships' in 1999 and 2001, the latter taking place southwest of Kyūshū, and the underwater sailing of a Chinese nuclear submarine in Japanese territorial waters around the Sakishima Islands, approximately 200 km southwest of Okinawa, added a new dimension to the role of the ECS in Japanese strategy. The safeguard of maritime traffic was to be coupled with 'guard and surveillance' operations to deal with the violation of Japanese air and maritime space (Japan Defense Agency 2005, p. 207). In the aftermath of the Chinese submarine incident, these operations became part of a wider effort to prevent aggressions upon Japan's offshore islands (Japan Ministry of Defense 2011, p. 225). In particular, the ECS was included in new normative and operational developments involving the JMSDF and the Japan Coast Guard (JCG), the country's primary maritime organisation for policing activities. In 2001, both the Coast Guard Law and the Self-Defense Force Law were amended and new provisions were added. These included the creation of a liaison system for the sharing of information between JCG and JMSDF, enabling the JMoD (former JDA) to gather data on expected illegal activities before the order for a maritime security operation is issued. Further, the new provisions empowered commanders conducting maritime security operations with the authority to use weapons if deemed necessary (Japan Defense Agency 2005, p. 211). A Manual on Joint Strategies concerning Suspicious Boats was also developed to determine the division of roles between the two organisations before and after an order for a security operation was issued, and joint training and exercises are regularly held to refine procedures for the pursuit and capture of unidentified vessels (Japan Ministry of Defense 2009, p. 201).

Japanese naval circles took stock of the increased experience, both in terms of missions and reach, further acknowledging an overall shift in the main theatre of operations from the northeast of Japan to the southwest. Chinese naval activities in the ECS and, to a lesser extent, North Korean adventurism in the same area and in the Sea of Japan were now sources of primary attention of Japanese military authorities. In a document published

22 For a brief overview, cf. Patalano 2011b, pp. 85-86. For an in-depth analysis of the transformation of Japanese capabilities during this period, Patalano 2008, pp. 876-888.

in 2008, Admiral Takei Tomohisa, one the JMSDF's leading uniformed strategists, formalised this theatre shift in the Japanese new naval strategy. The JMSDF was to undertake a wide range of missions, from maritime security to missile defense and sea control within the Tokyo-Guam-Taiwan (TGT) triangle, an area where sea-lanes overlap with disputed maritime and resource-rich spaces. The TGT area was essential to Japanese trade and energy security – and offshore islands within this space were key to monitor and, if necessary, protect maritime routes. Similarly, this space was crucial to the logistical effort in support of the American presence in the western Pacific and in turn, to the American military contribution to the US-Japan alliance. Intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities were regarded as the minimum additions for Japan to patrol and deter competitors effectively, and at affordable costs (Patalano 2011a, pp. 105-106).

The defense review that led to the adoption of the 2010 NDPG rewarded this vision, confirming the centrality of the ECS to national security. With no substantial financial boost to the defense budget, the submarine force was set to expand with the current force of 16 boats (18, including two training submarines) bound to increase to 22 units by 2015.[23] Offshore island-based signal intelligence facilities, satellite and maritime air surveillance, and the strengthening of short-range lifting capabilities for the ground forces were other core aspects of the Japanese defensive trident in the ECS. The major exercise organised by the Japanese armed forces in the Amami Islands (Okinawa prefecture) in November 2011, and involving about 35,000 personnel, 1,300 vehicles, six warships and 180 airplanes is a good example of Japan's efforts to implement a strategy combining sea lanes and off-shore islands defense («SDF starts unprecedented exercise in Kyūshū, Okinawa» 2011).

5 Conclusions

So what does an analysis of Sino-Japanese relations from a maritime perspective have to say about bilateral security issues? The ECS is the main fabric connecting China and Japan, the space where their boundaries – contested as they are – meet. Yet, the ECS, like any other maritime space, is mostly empty and cannot be permanently occupied in the way land can be. These structural features made the ECS a medium for communication and exchanges by means of trade and commerce, as well as a space for national assertion and the projection of power. Both dimensions

23 This goal will be achieved by maintaining the current procurement process unaltered and by extending the life of each submarine to 25 years.

have coexisted and continue to coexist. Indeed, today, as the economic significance of the ECS to Chinese and Japanese national security agendas increases, so does the prospect of a continued engagement between the two actors in this realm.

In terms of bilateral engagement, what are the security prospects? In the ECS, the territorial dispute over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands is the most difficult to deal with, as the experience of increased maritime confrontation between the two coast guards from 2012 to 2014 proved. Japan and China fundamentally disagree on the question of the sovereignty of these islands. For the Japanese authorities, the official position is that there is no dispute. By contrast, the People's Daily – the official newspaper of the Communist Party – has defined the islands as a 'core interest' («Senkakus are 'Core Interest': China» 2012). In this respect, the instrumental use of the territorial disputes by nationalist groups in China and Japan to advance their domestic political agendas represents a consistent source of tension. In a similar vein, the proactive behaviour of Chinese maritime law-enforcement agencies, competing within the country for larger budget shares, greater responsibilities and enhanced capabilities, has also contributed to fuelling tensions (Goldstein 2010, p. 31; NIDS China Security Report 2011, p. 46). At the same time, the sea-lanes and the resources of the ECS are regarded as very important to the national security in both countries. All these considerations would suggest that in the foreseeable future, maritime security issues in the ECS are likely to remain a source of tension.

What then is the prospect for escalation towards conflict? The answer is difficult, though the very nature of the maritime realm is likely to enable Chinese and Japanese authorities to control the degree of escalation. The combination of the impossibility to permanently occupy, and therefore militarise, the maritime realm, and its regular use for transportation, trade, and access to resources creates a layer of strategic flexibility. Governments in Tokyo and Beijing have the option to nuance their actions, and even favour cooperative forms of interactions. In this respect, the willingness to jointly investigate and explore gas fields, like in the case of the Chunxiao Gas Field, would suggest that the existence of an agreement over the territorial disputes is not regarded as a precondition for economic cooperation. In the military dimension, the recent expansion of the PLAN implied greater activities in the ECS. Similarly, the Chinese adoption of an Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the ECS in November 2013 suggested that the Chinese military will more likely increase its presence in this maritime basin across and over its surface, sub-surface, and air dimensions. Nonetheless, whilst the debate on the navy's roles as a protector of wider maritime interests is fast evolving, it still remains somewhat underdeveloped in terms of doctrinal grammar and capabilities. On the other hand, the increased deployment of law-enforcement agencies is a powerful reminder of the growing number of actors operating in the ECS

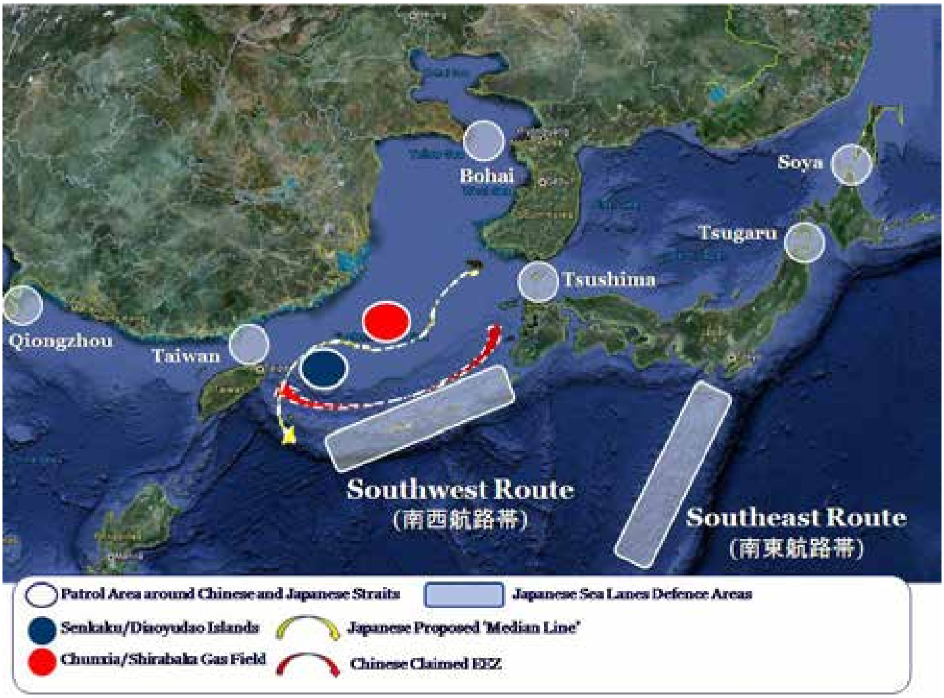

Figure 1. The East China Sea in Chinese and Japanese Strategy

and of the need for them to develop ways to interact with each other to defuse the risk of unintended escalation. Creating depth in the interactions among Japanese and Chinese maritime agencies and operators is where national authorities can decide whether they want the waves of the ECS to separate or unite them.

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Contemporary Japan
Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition

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Regional Integration in East Asia
Can Japan Be a Leading Player?

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Abstract Since the end of the Cold War, East Asia has been experiencing a growing commitment on the part of national governments towards regional cooperation in such key areas as trade, finance and security. The institutionalisation of intra-regional relations is investigated with a focus on the role of Japan, in order to assess the country's past achievements, and potential for further contributions. The first section outlines in general terms what the incentives are to pursue multilateralism at regional level, then points at the problems that may arise from the formation of overlapping frameworks. The second section discusses more specifically the position of Japan with respect to the competing 'Asian' and 'Asia-Pacific' schemes, commenting on game theory as applied to the relation between these two regional models. On this basis, the latter part of the paper explores in detail the development of diplomatic frameworks in East Asia, seeking to explain the reasons for the centrality of ASEAN in the resulting regional architecture. The final paragraphs further elaborate on the Japanese perspective on the idea of an 'East Asian community', as expressed by successive cabinets in the last decade. The conclusion, while reaffirming that the open character of regionalism in East Asia allows Japan to take initiative as a major player, also addresses the political obstacles in the way of closer integration.

Summary 1. Introduction: The Rationale for Regionalism in East Asia. – 2. Japan's Place in the Evolving East Asian Architecture. – 3. Building a Region: towards an East Asian Community? – 4. Conclusion.

1 Introduction: The Rationale for Regionalism in East Asia

To many observers, the remarkable progress of the regional integration which has unfolded in East Asia[1] in the past two decades appears strongly market-driven in the context of globalisation: with both challenges and

1 Unless otherwise specified, in this paper East Asia will stand for the ten ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) members (Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam) with the addition of the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea and Japan. As a regional entity, these countries constitute the ASEAN Plus Three (APT), which is one of the main frameworks discussed here. The term 'framework' will indicate comprehensively different forms of institutional cooperation, ranging from official agreements to diplomatic fora and permanent organisations. Also, 'membership' will refer broadly to participation in any of these arrangements.

opportunities opening up as national economies become more interconnected, it makes sense for neighbouring states to agree on shared rules, pool resources and coordinate policies in the pursuit of mutual benefits. Common efforts to protect maritime trade from piracy, which led to a major diplomatic agreement in 2004, may be cited as one example of the spill-over effects of economic interdependence.[2] Given the sheer size of East Asia in terms of world's share of GDP and population, it is quite logical that studies on cooperation among countries in the region have focused prevalently on its economic dimension (see Ahn, Baldwin, Cheong 2005; Fujita, Kuroiwa, Kumagai 2011; Kawai et al. 2010). However, structuralist interpretations, stressing how the economy creates the need for institutions, tend to overlook that markets themselves are also the product of political and social factors. The impetuous growth of China, which took off only after its Communist leadership decided to open the way to economic reforms in the late 1970s, makes for the most evident case in point. The need to carefully examine the political incentives to establishing closer ties with other countries is especially clear when facing the question of why such relations may develop on a regional base, rather than within global frameworks.

Regionalism, which can be defined here as the sum of institutional processes aimed at promoting inter-state cooperation within a continuous geographic area, does not necessarily contradict globalisation. On the contrary, it is precisely to enhance their ability to engage in worldwide competition that states find it convenient to join forces with their neighbours: territorial proximity can represent an advantage in several situations, as when opening markets to achieve economies of scale. Moreover, the formation of regional partnerships may be interpreted as a preliminary stage to facilitate dialogue and further integration with other parts of the world. In a less optimistic perspective, regionalism has been regarded as a defensive reaction against the perceived inefficiency of multilateral institutions at global level.[3] In the field of finance, for instance, a driving motive for launching the Chiang Mai Initiative (CMI) for bilateral currency swaps in 2000 was that of reducing dependence from the International Monetary Fund,

2 The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) currently brings together 19 countries with direct access on either Indian or Pacific Ocean. For updated reports on the related activities, see ReCAAP ISC, http://www.recaap.org/. This aspect of security is just one of the issues regularly covered in the ASEAN Maritime Forum, which has been flanked by its expanded version (EAMF) since 2012; the latter includes APT, Australia and New Zealand, as well as the Russian Federation and the United States. See ASEAN 2012c, http://www.asean.org/news/asean-statement-communiques/item/chairman-s-statement-3rd-asean-maritime-forum; 2012b, http://www.asean.org/news/asean-statement-communiques/item/1st-expanded-asean-maritime-forum-manila.

3 On the relationship between globalisation and regionalism, see Fawcett, Hurrell 1995; Nesadurai 2003, chap. 1; Samson, Woolcock 2003.

whose management of the Asian financial crisis of 1997-98 had aroused widespread criticism in the affected countries.[4] Similarly, the recent diffusion of preferential trade agreements around the world has been explained as an attempt to avoid the adverse consequences of stalled negotiations or disputes under the GATT/WTO (Mansfield, Reinhardt 2003).

Regardless of whether the interaction between global and regional dimension is seen more in terms of pro-active or reactive behaviour, there always remains a fundamental question to reflect upon: what are the constitutive elements that define a region and therefore justify the creation of international frameworks on this scale? Ideally, it should be possible to roughly trace borders by linking spatial continuity to a certain degree of homogeneity in material and cultural conditions; from this angle, one may feel confident enough to conclude that Iceland would hardly qualify for membership in an association of African countries. In practice, however, the concept of region is so vague as to allow a broad range of interpretations, with the result that the same territory may belong to different supranational clusters: it all depends on the criteria adopted for inclusion. This polyvalence, in turn, provides legitimacy to the formation of partially overlapping regional entities. Further complicating things is the possibility of locating a country within several concentric circles, from sub-regional to trans-regional.

Thus, it is not exceptional that a state has the opportunity to participate simultaneously in more than one framework, even in the same policy area. Indonesia, for example, discusses economic issues with the rest of South East Asia as an ASEAN member, and with greater East Asia in the APT meetings. Together with all other APT countries, Indonesia also dialogues in the East Asia Summit (EAS) with partners as diverse as India, Russia and the United States; moreover, it is a member of the Asia-Pacific Cooperation (APEC), whose geopolitical spectrum coincides largely but not perfectly with that of EAS.[5] Although some kinds of international cooperation are typically exclusive, such as military alliances, on the whole, multiple membership is not rare. The potential advantages of adopting a variable geometry in the search for partners are easily understandable: by joining different frameworks, a state can increase its ability to pursue a specific policy at the level which it considers most effective for the achievement of its national objectives. It can also adjust in a more flexible

4 The CMI, which later developed into a multilateral arrangement (CMIM), started as a watered-down version of the Japanese proposal for the creation of an Asian Monetary Fund, which had met with resistance from the United States. See Lipscy 2003; Hayashi 2006, chap. 4; Lee 2006.

5 The relationship between these layers will be discussed further. Up-to-date information is available in the respective official websites. See ASEAN, `http://www.asean.org/` (for APT and EAS, see section External Relations) and APEC, `http://www.apec.org/`.

manner to changes in the external environment, shifting the focus of its efforts from one grouping to another when the chances of obtaining some gain through the latter appear higher.[6] In particular, because it is usually more difficult to reach consensus on strategic issues when the number of countries involved becomes larger, multi-layered membership allows for the adoption of a two-speed approach to integration: faster within the inner circle, slower in the outer rim.[7] In this way, the global-versus-regional dialectics can be further articulated in several intermediate levels. This pragmatic attitude appears especially befitting to East Asia, where efforts for cooperation have to cope with great diversity in economic development, political systems and cultures.

On the other hand, when regional frameworks overlap, problems may arise in terms of incoherence and conflicting obligations. The notorious 'spaghetti-bowl' effect consequent to the proliferation of preferential – that is, discriminatory – trade agreements is perhaps the issue most frequently brought forward to illustrate this negative side of cooperation, in East Asia (Baldwin 2007; Kawai, Wignaraja 2011) as well as in other parts of the world (Mwebeiha 2004; Tavares, Tang 2011). Such problems, it could be argued, represent just a transitory phase of unavoidable distress before harmonisation is carried out at a higher level. In East Asia, the gradual formation of the ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA) in 1992-1999 has served as stepping stone to the conclusion of similar agreements between the whole ASEAN bloc and its neighbouring countries in the past decade.[8] The

6 For economy of discussion, this paper treats states as if they were rational individuals. In reality, however, the behaviour of a national government towards its foreign counterparts is the product of compromise among many, and often competing, domestic actors. Therefore, a variation of policy objectives may depend on a change in political leadership, or reflect a shift in the balance of social forces that influence government decisions. The last section of the paper will touch on this problem.

7 A two-speed policy may also be adopted inside a single regional entity, as in the case of the Euro zone within the European Union. However, members normally avoid this kind of arrangement out of concern for the threat it represent for unity. In this respect, it is to be noted that in the EU the decision made by some countries to retain their national currency, despite already meeting the technical requirements for passage to the Euro, signals a serious strategic divergence between members.

8 Currently, ASEAN has separate FTAs with South Korea (see AKFTA, http://akfta.asean.org), Japan (see ASEAN: ASEAN-Japan Free Trade Area, http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-economic-community/item/asean-japan-free-trade-area-2; MOFA: ASEAN-Japan Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/fta/asean.html), China (see ASEAN-CN, http://www.asean-cn.org; MOC, http://fta.mofcom.gov.cn/topic/chinaasean.shtml), Australia-New Zealand (see AANZFTA, http://aanzfta.asean.org; DFAT 2014, http://dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/aanzfta/Pages/asean-australia-new-zealand-free-trade-agreement.aspx; MOFAT, http://www.asean.fta.govt.nz/) and India (see ASEAN: ASEAN-India Free Trade Area, http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-economic-community/item/asean-india-free-trade-area-3; MOCI, http://commerce.nic.in/trade/international_ta_indasean.asp).

coming into force of several 'ASEAN+1' arrangements, in turn, has built momentum for more ambitious plans that aim both at deepening integration and at enlarging its geographic scope. A first scheme, launched in 2001 by an international study group, set as its target an East Asia Free Trade Agreement (EAFTA) among all APT countries. This initiative, which received strong support from China, was flanked in 2006 by Japan's proposal for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership for East Asia (CEPEA). The latter, in addition to APT, would cover the (at that time) other three participants in the just-born EAS – namely, India, Australia and New Zealand. After some years of concurrent study, ASEAN has proposed to merge the two plans into a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which would not require the commitment of a predetermined number of members to be activated. Instead, any country already engaged in an FTA with ASEAN would be left free to decide when to join the RCEP. Negotiations on this compromise option started in November 2012, to be concluded within three years (Basu Das 2012).[9]

The process of economic integration described above may serve as evidence in support of the thesis that, in the long run, the fruits of regionalism will reach out to an ever-expanding community, until the final merger of blocs into a new global order. However, in the immediate perspective, what stands out is rather the inter-state competition involved in leading the process in the preferred direction. While China has pushed for concluding an agreement restricted to East Asia first, Japan has attempted to bring in another Asian giant – India – together with the two Oceanian neighbours. This can be interpreted as an effort to reduce China's relative weight in the prospective arrangement, and possibly create the conditions for longer negotiations. ASEAN, on its part, is striving to mediate between these positions in order to retain the central role it has enjoyed so far in the construction of regional mechanisms. As I will discuss further, these lines of action are consistent with the behaviour adopted by the same states when facing the issue of the enlargement of diplomatic fora.

Clearly, conciliating frameworks and setting the rules for new ones is not just a technical matter. While regions themselves are ultimately political constructs, defining the borders of related cooperation concerns, in essence, the optimal size of membership with respect to the interests of participants. Even when a consensus is reached, as normally required

9 For documents and other information related to EAFTA, CEPEA and RCEP, see JEG 2006, http://www.thaifta.com/thaifta/Portals/0/eafta_report.pdf; JEG II 2009, http://www.thaifta.com/thaifta/Portals/0/eafta_phase2.pdf; Nezu 2009; TTSG 2009, http://www.dfat.gov.au/asean/eas/cepea-phase-2-report.pdf; METI s.d., http://www.meti.go.jp/policy/trade_policy/east_asia/activity/rcep.html. For a concise account of the whole process, see DFAT 2012, http://dfat.gov.au/trade/agreements/rcep/Pages/background-to-the-regional-comprehensive-economic-partnership-rcep-initiative.aspx. The alternative between EAFTA and CEPEA is discussed in Kawai, Wignaraja 2008.

for sensitive issues, decisions are likely to correspond to the best choice of only part of the countries involved. And since the structure of membership affects the possibilities of each participant to exert an influence in all subsequent decision-making, it is arguably a fundamental issue to address in the study of regionalism (Baldwin, Haaparanta, Kiander 1995; Wesley 1997; Hamanaka 2009). This leads us to the question of leadership: which countries prove more capable of shaping regional frameworks in accordance with their own preferences, and what are the sources of this ability? The remain of this paper will attempt to provide an answer about the East Asian case, focussing on Japan's role in the ongoing process of integration. Because dealing in detail with the manifold dimensions of regionalism would require more space than available here, discussion will centre on the development of diplomatic fora, that is, summits and other high-level political meetings held on a regular basis. Notwithstanding a certain trend towards functional specialisation, these frameworks have retained a generalist character that makes them suitable for a comprehensive assessment of regional processes. In fact, since the 1990s, they have constituted the primary stage for the planning of other initiatives in specific policy areas.

2 Japan's Place in the Evolving East Asian Architecture

Despite its stereotyped image as a country with a low-profile foreign policy, Japan has in record a long list of initiatives for regional cooperation, some of which date back as far as the 1950s. As recently reviewed by Hamanaka (2009), through the post-war period the Japanese government has been an active promoter of diplomatic and financial frameworks, playing a pivotal role in the latter field in particular; besides the already mentioned CMI, the foundation of the Asian Development Bank (1966) may be recalled as a major achievement. Less remarkable has been the country's contribution to trade regionalism, due to the veto long exerted by agricultural interests and other economic sectors that benefitted from protectionist policies (Mulgan 2000, 2005, 2006; Hoshiro 2011). Engagement in this sphere has increased under pressure of the growing dynamism of Asian neighbours, particularly after China's announcement in 2001 of its intention to conclude an FTA with ASEAN within ten years. After trying its hand at bilateral agreements with innocuous Singapore (2002), Japan has been gradually catching up,[10] though its attitude still falls short of being proactive. The circumstances of the CEPEA initiative, like the recent belated decision to join in negotiations for the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP),

10 For updated information on Japan's economic agreements and other ongoing negotiations, see MOFA: Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), `http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/economy/fta/`.

show that Tokyo has chiefly taken action to intervene on plans traced by others, rather than leading the way. However, the field in which the Japanese presence has been least assertive is that of security, where the bilateral alliance with the US has so far obscured the potential for complementary frameworks.

Already from this brief sketch of Japan's uneven commitment to various streams of regionalism, one may infer where its strengths and weaknesses in facing the international arena lie. For a balanced evaluation, though, it is important to consider the supply side of the problem (the country's capacity to exert leadership) together with its demand side (the incentives for taking initiative). Otherwise, it would prove impossible to establish whether lower engagement in certain areas depends more on a lack of abilities or of interest. A good starting point may be Hamanaka's assessment of the costs and benefits generally related to sponsoring different kinds of regional cooperation, which he then applies to Japan's case (2009, pp. 18-21; 2010, pp. 1-3). According to his classification, diplomatic frameworks are those which deliver the highest net gain, because the advantages that they bring to the leading country, such as those of setting rules and acquiring prestige, are not countered by significant costs. Financial arrangements, while offering similar gains in their particular realm, entail a heavier burden in terms of organisation and the responsibility to provide assistance to other members (through both long-term investment and liquidity in the event of a crisis); however, it may still be worth initiating a project if the expected benefits outweigh these costs. The appeal of trade frameworks, instead, depends on the extent to which domestic producers are vulnerable to foreign competition. Concretely speaking, Japan's behaviour can then be explained as follows: first, the country has been an active proponent of diplomatic regionalism because it could only benefit from this approach; second, it has led major financial initiatives thanks to its dominant position as an economic power, which enabled it to bear the required costs while reaping huge benefits; finally, despite the overall strength of its manufacturing industry, Japan has not played a leading role in trade liberalisation due to opposition from the less competitive sectors of its economy.

The above analysis calls for several observations in the same line of reasoning. With respect to finance, one may argue that some of the obligations that Hamanaka presents as costs, such as official development assistance (ODA), not only increase the supplier's prestige but can also be conducive to economic benefits in a more direct way. Japan's ODA policy, in fact, has long been criticised for its mercantilist approach, that is its focus on the profits, which accrue from the purchase of goods and technology by the recipient countries (Hook, Zhang 2006). Therefore, an upward revision of the net gain of sponsoring financial cooperation may help explain why diplomatic frameworks do not represent, overall, a larger part of the regionalist projects initiated by Japan. Another element that requires consideration is the gap in the country's ability to play the leader in the two fields: unlike finance, where Japanese primacy has been unchallenged until the recent rise of China, there is a wide margin for competition in regional diplomacy. Undeniably, Japan has sufficient material endowment to act with authority at political summits, particularly as economic issues always figure high in the agenda. In this respect, however, its relative position has been declining since the early 1990s, just as the end of the Cold War was opening new spaces for dialogue. After over two decades of sluggish economy, Japan has lost much of its former appeal as a model for successful development; this, in turn, has cast doubts on the solidity of its domestic institutions, and on the skills of its political leaders.

Besides suffering from the reverberations of material decline on national prestige, Japan's potential for diplomatic initiative in East Asia has been negatively affected by long-standing history issues. In contrast with Germany, where thorough reflection on the Nazi regime and its wartime responsibilities smoothed the way to international recognition of the country as a central actor in European integration, Japan still has trouble in dealing with the legacy of its imperial past and war atrocities. The importance of this weak point, which is a favourite target of criticism from China and Korea, should not be underestimated. Since regions are «imagined communities» – to borrow Benedict Anderson's definition of nations (1983) – the capacity to inspire a sense of shared identity and trust can prove crucial to the success of diplomatic efforts. This is especially true in East Asia, where the struggle against colonial rule and decades of intra-regional conflicts have created a fertile ground for nationalist discourse. Disputed historical narratives, along with past and present territorial claims, make for a political environment unfavourable to discussion of issues related to sovereignty (Hemmer, Katzenstein 2002; Acharya 2009). In this light, it can be better appreciated why not only Japan, but also other countries have devoted relatively little energy to institutionalising cooperation in the sphere of security. Although the creation of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1994 represents a significant step forward in preventive diplomacy,[11] the limits of dialogue are apparent when compared to what has been achieved on economic matters. It should also be noted that any initiative related to security cannot ignore the hegemonic status of the United States at global level and its military presence in East Asia, which rests upon close bilateral ties with several countries. In the context of growing China-US rivalry, the already difficult task of easing tensions in the region is not getting easier.

US influence on East Asian regionalism, however, has been stretching far beyond security policy. It has been the chief engine of recurrent com-

11 Currently including 27 members (the European Union counts as one) in four continents, ARF is a good example of the flexibility of regional concepts. For official information, see ARF, `http://aseanregionalforum.asean.org/`.

petition between two alternative visions of integration: one following an 'Asia-only' approach, basically restricted to the APT countries; the other promoting the concept of 'Asia-Pacific', which means expansion of the geopolitical range to embrace the far sides of the Pacific rim. APEC, which under US guidance has evolved from a purely economic conference to a place for dialogue on a wide range of issues, is probably the most representative product of the latter current of thought (Ravenhill 2001). As discussed in the previous section, in principle two or more regional dimensions can peacefully coexist and even complement each other in a fruitful way. In actual practice, though, the relation between 'Asian' and 'Asia-Pacific' paths has been tense due to the leadership question looming in the background. It is in this perspective that Japan's role in the building of regional frameworks acquires special importance, because neither option can function effectively without the active participation of this country. Therefore, it is necessary to link the analysis of Japanese capacity and motives for action to the problem of the optimal size of membership.

Hamanaka (2010) has gone so far as to conclude that the development of regional institutions in East Asia can be reduced to a cyclical pattern, created by the struggle for leadership between Japan and the US. Theoretically, the cycle derives from a game pay-off matrix which compares the net gain of either country under three different arrangements: the first is led by Japan and excludes the US; the second is led by the US, with Japan acting positively as junior partner; the third is also US-led, but without active support from Japan. It is assumed that Japan can lead other members only if it manages to exclude the US, which has higher international status; conversely, the US benefits from the active participation of Japan, because in this way it can share with its partner the costs while retaining greater benefits. Therefore, Japan's preferred option is the 'Asia-only' scheme, while that of the US is 'Asia-Pacific' with an active Japan. This conflict of interests sets the cycle in motion. The prediction is that Japan will first try to establish a framework without inviting the US to join; the latter will react by obtaining membership, thereby displacing Japan from the driver's seat. Next, Japan loses interest in the enlarged framework and does not actively cooperate in it. At this point, as the cost of operation exceeds the benefits, the US too disengages, bringing the initiative to a dead end. In the meantime, Japan has started a new project on its own, which marks the beginning of a new cycle. A variant is that, if the US cannot join in Japan's initiative, it will establish an Asia-Pacific framework in direct competition. This duplication soon proves dysfunctional, leading to the abandonment of both projects.

For empirical evidence, Hamanaka tracks the rise and decline of financial frameworks since the 1990s, and of regional summitry since the 1960s. Although findings show that his theory can be a useful tool to understand the basic dynamics of Japan-US interaction, this approach also has some evident limits. The foremost is that, by restricting the focus of analysis on two countries, it downplays the role of other actors. This problem emerges more clearly as discussion turns to recent facts, since regional integration has been advancing amid the relative decline of Japan. To defend the explanatory power of his theory, Hamanaka observes that China is in the process of replacing Japan as the most influential state in East Asia; consequently, future regional cycles will derive from a China-US dualism. Having lost its chances for leadership, Japan will have to decide whether its second-best choice is a China-led (Asia-only) or US-led (Asia-Pacific) scheme, likely opting for the latter. However, this adjustment of roles still does not provide a convincing explanation for the current stratification of regional frameworks, which does not seem to be following a cyclical pattern. The establishment of the EAS, for instance, has not caused a decline in APT initiatives. Nor has the US applied to join the CMIM, where Japan and China now stand on an equal footing as top contributors. Furthermore, the theory should be tested on other kinds of regional cooperation, such as trade and security. In order to address these issues, it is opportune to re-examine the evolution of diplomatic frameworks so as to acquire a more nuanced view of the balance of forces among regional actors.

3 Building a Region: towards an East Asian Community?

East Asian countries have a reputation for their cautious approach to regionalism, which means pursuing integration through a step-by-step process, largely relying on informal means to build consensus. As a term of comparison, commentators often point at the European Union, with its highly institutionalised structure and legalistic decision-making (Murray 2010). The preference for a more flexible, low-tone mode of cooperation is understood in the light of the deep divides that still mark East Asia, as recalled before. However, the present lack of 'hard' features, such as the adoption of a common currency or the creation of supra-national organs, does not mean that there has been no substantial progress in the latter decades. On the contrary, both the scope and intensity of institutional engagement have grown considerably over time. Although the evolving regional architecture has a supple structure, ASEAN has emerged as a major pole of aggregation. Since none of its member states has enough material strength to be perceived as a threat by the larger powers, ASEAN has gradually won recognition for its role as mediator and core element of several regional frameworks. The process was facilitated by the enlargement of membership to the countries of former Indochina in 1995-99, which enhanced the association's ability to exert a unifying force throughout South East Asia.

As can be appreciated at a glance by browsing through the thick schedule of official events held throughout the year under its umbrella, ASEAN has become the hub of an intricate network of coordinating committees, ministerial conferences and other opportunities for (trans-) regional dialogue and cooperation. At the peak of these activities stands a string of summits of political leaders from each ASEAN country and their main partners, which take place once a year in conjunction with the association's own summit. The latter, originally held with irregular frequency since 1976, became annual in 2001 and biannual in 2008. The result of this combination of top diplomatic meetings is a concentric structure: ASEAN at the core, APT as the next circle, and finally EAS. Within this frame, various ASEAN+1 summits project from the centre as axes to connect it with either Asian or 'Pacific' countries. Historically, this architecture has grown through successive additions. China, Japan and Korea have met separately with ASEAN on an annual basis since 1997, which also marks the beginning of the joint APT summits. However, each of these countries had already been holding high-profile meetings with ASEAN in previous years. The establishment of formal relations as Dialogue Partners for the three states dates back to 1977, 1989 and 1996, respectively. India, a Dialogue Partner since 1995, held its first annual summit with ASEAN in 2002. The latest application of the '+1' formula concerns the ASEAN-US summit, which started in 2009.[12] In the meantime, a wider circle has stemmed from APT to span across three continents: in 2005, the EAS was born from the addition of India, Australia and New Zealand; six years later, full membership was extended to Russia and the US.

As a result, both 'Asian' and 'Asia-Pacific' schemes are now firmly established around ASEAN. Does their development reflect a competition between two leading countries, possibly along a cyclical movement? It is well known that the idea of forming a geopolitical framework the size of APT was first officially launched by Malaysia's Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad, who called for the creation of an East Asia Economic Group in December 1990.[13] The proposal, prompted by the stalemate of negotiations in the Uruguay Round of the GATT earlier that year, was also a reaction against the Australian initiative which led to the founding of APEC in 1989. A stern Asianist ideologue, Mahathir charged his plan with overtones hostile to the US and its close allies in the Pacific. It was precisely this attitude, however, that would alienate from the start other ASEAN members, together with Japan and Korea. Moreover, the exclusion of all non-Asian countries from the prospective bloc was also seen as a major deficiency

12 The meeting scheduled for October 2013 is called the First ASEAN-US Summit because until last year the official denomination was ASEAN-US Leaders' Summit. However, the change in name does not correspond to a substantial upgrade, since President Barack Obama attended all previous meetings.

13 For press sources on the facts presented in this section, see Cossa 2007, pp. 162-165; Hamanaka 2009, pp. 68-76, 147-153.

from a practical standpoint, since the volume of intra-regional trade was considerably lower than at present. Although more moderate in tone, the revised proposal presented by Malaysia one year later under the name of East Asian Economic Caucus did not get a warmer reception. On the other hand, APEC raised its own standing thanks to the introduction of an annual Leaders' Meeting, proposed by Australia in 1992 and held from the following year onwards with the endorsement of the Clinton administration. Membership gradually increased from the original 12 countries to the present 21, including China (1991). For a while, then, it seemed that APEC might actually evolve into an effective tool for comprehensive integration across the Pacific. Reality, however, remained below expectations even in the core area of trade, where frictions soon arose between the US-led push to open markets, and the more circumspect policy of most Asian partners. It must also be recalled that APEC's potential to become a key diplomatic framework was undermined from an early stage onwards by the inclusion of Taiwan, albeit with the appeasing denomination of 'Chinese Taipei'. In fact, to avoid raising the prickly issue of the island's status in the international community, all countries have been participating as 'member economies' instead of political entities – which also explains the still separate membership of Hong Kong and China.

While Mahathir's initiative was both premature and unwelcome, conditions for the establishment of another Asian-only grouping became ripe in the latter half of the 1990s. Originating in the wake of the financial crisis, APT drew vigour from a shared sense of the need to strengthen cooperation in order to reduce the weight of external influences. Japan's readiness to participate was certainly crucial to the success of this new process. However, it must be pointed out that the idea of inviting China, Japan and Korea to a joint summit had already emerged within ASEAN before the crisis. Also, it was ASEAN which provided this solution after the failure of Japan's attempt to create an Asian Monetary Fund without previous consultations with China.[14] It is quite transparent that ASEAN did not want to get constrained within a framework where either Japan or China would occupy a dominant position. Since then, ASEAN has managed to retain its centrality in the regional architecture, avoiding marginalisation at the hands of the larger powers. From the standpoint of prestige, this ability results in the continuing practice of holding the enlarged summits (APT and EAS) exclusively within ASEAN territory. The location of ministers' meetings and lesser consultations also rotates among other partner countries who may use special anniversaries as an opportunity to host their own ASEAN+1 summit. Nevertheless, China's early offer to organise the

14 Although US opposition is most frequently mentioned as the main cause of the AMF debacle, China played a decisive role by keeping silent at the regional ministerial meeting in Hong Kong of 21 November 1997. See Lipscy 2003, p. 96.

EAS was turned down twice, in 2004 and 2005. Secondly, it is a recurrent feature of joint declarations on regional projects to reaffirm that ASEAN is the major driving force in East Asia cooperation (most notably in ASEAN 2004, 2005b, 2012a; DFAT 2010).[15] More recently, ASEAN members boosted their international standing by signing a Charter in November 2007 that finally conferred legal personality upon the Association, clearly defined its organs and set various rules for participant countries (ASEAN 2007).[16] Four years later, ASEAN built upon this foundation to form a Comprehensive Partnership with the United Nations (ASEAN 2011).[17]

As this brief account suggests, the formation of APT represented a shift away from APEC and towards an Asian-centred regional structure, in which ASEAN would provide a middle ground between China and Japan. The next question, then, is why the need emerged for the successive establishment of an EAS. Clearly, the latter does not merely signal a swing back to a Pacific scheme led by the US, which was not even among the founding members. The EAS summit concept originated from within APT and only later evolved into a trans-regional framework. In 1998, in response to a proposal by Korean President Kim Dae-Jung, the APT countries decided to charge a think tank of eminent scholars with the task of drawing up guidelines for comprehensive cooperation in the region. This track-two committee, named the East Asia Vision Group (EAVG), issued its report in 2001. In the meantime, each government appointed senior officials to form an East Asia Study Group (EASG), whose mission was to assess the feasibility of the EAVG proposals and lay out an operating plan. The final report (2002) selected 26 high-priority actions in a full range of policy areas; with regard to «institutional cooperation», it recommended that they «pursue the evolution of the annual ASEAN+3 Summit into an East Asian Summit» (EASG 2002, http://www.asean.org/images/archive/pdf/easg.pdf, p. 18). This idea, which had already circulated at the APT Summit of 2000 in Singapore, was endorsed by the EAVG (EASG 2002, p. 17) without further explanations. The EASG devoted to the whole of Part III of its report to the EAS, addressing fundamental questions such as the timing for formation, the nature of the new entity, its members and the criteria for admission

15 See ASEAN 2004, http://www.asean.org/news/item/external-relations-china-asean-china-foreign-ministers-informal-meeting-joint-press-release-21-june-2004; 2005b, http://www.asean.org/news/item/kuala-lumpur-declaration-on-the-east-asia-summit-kuala-lumpur-14-december-2005; DFAT 2010, http://www.dfat.gov.au/asean/eas/ha_noi_declaration.html; ASEAN 2012a, http://www.asean.org/images/documents/Chairman%20Statement%20of%20The%20Second%20East%20Asia%20Summit%20EAS%20Foreign%20Ministers%20Meeting%2012%20July%202012%20baru.pdf.

16 For the full text, see ASEAN 2007, http://www.asean.org/archive/publications/ASEAN-Charter.pdf.

17 ASEAN 2011, http://www.asean.org/archive/documents/19th%20summit/UN-JD.pdf.

(EASG 2002, p. 59). Moving from the premise that «through the Asian financial crisis, countries in East Asia realized the dark side of globalization, which could render individual East Asian countries more vulnerable to global economic forces» (EASG 2002, p. 57) and that «ASEAN countries, China, Japan, and Korea share a common destiny» (EASG 2002, p. 58), the EASG concluded that

> [T]he emerging sentiment at this juncture is that ASEAN+3 represents the most viable and practical way to move the nascent East Asian process forward. There is also a general feeling that the evolution of an EAS should proceed in a gradual and balanced way, and a building-block approach is the best way forward. […] it must be part of an evolutionary process that builds on the substantive comfort levels of the existing ASEAN+3 framework (2002, p. 59).

Therefore, although neither document clarified what the scope and aim of an EAS should concretely be, emphasis was placed on APT as the primary vehicle for integration. It remained obscure whether the EAS would represent an upgrade of APT activities with the same members, or embrace a larger number of countries. A hint of a possible enlargement appeared in the 'Guiding Principles' section of the EAVG report, which stated: «Harmony with Global System: our regional community shall be outward-looking and open to the rest of the world. […] we must be active in pursuing our global linkages» (EAVG 2001, `http://www.asean.org/images/archive/pdf/east_asia_vision.pdf`, p. 8).

In 2004, China made an official proposal to its APT partners to launch the EAS without adding new members. However, in April 2005, besides rejecting China's offer to host the inaugural summit, ASEAN decided to invite India to join; one month later, at the Informal APT Foreign Ministers' Meeting (FMM) in Kyoto, an agreement was reached to further include Australia and New Zealand; this was confirmed in July at the FMM in Vientiane (ASEAN 2005a, `http://www.asean.org/communities/asean-political-security-community/item/chairmans-s-press-statement-of-the-sixth-asean3-foreign-ministers-meeting-vientiane-27-july-2005-2`). Thus, the first EAS that took place in Kuala Lumpur in December that year was an 'ASEAN+3+3' gathering. Russia participated as an observer at the invitation of Malaysia, which, on the other hand, turned down Japan's proposal to grant the same status to the US. Although this exclusion aroused concern among some American officials, the George W. Bush administration adopted a wait-and-see policy towards the EAS (Cossa 2007, pp. 167-168; Hamanaka 2009, p. 75), while keeping APEC as its preferred framework. This attitude, however, changed under the next presidency, which expressed strong interest in joining the EAS as part of its ‘Pivot to Asia’ strategy.[18] President Obama was explicit in marking his distance from the relative disregard for multilateral frameworks shown by his predecessor:

> I know that the United States has been disengaged from these [regional] organizations in recent years. So let me be clear: those days have passed. As an Asia Pacific nation, the United States expects to be involved in the discussions that shape the future of this region, and to participate fully in appropriate organizations as they are established and evolve (speech held in Tokyo on 14 November 2009).[19]

In the background of growing Chinese assertiveness in regional affairs, ASEAN finally agreed to accept the US as a full member of the EAS from 2011. The same invitation was extended to Russia.

This steady process of enlargement, which stands in contrast to the cautious approach of the EASG, may appear as a textbook case of realist balancing. Japan, in particular, has consistently pushed for the inclusion of more ‘Pacific’ countries as its influence continued to decline vis-à-vis that of China. The outcome, though, has not been an evolution of APT into EAS; rather, the latter has started to complement APT as one of its linkages to the trans-regional dimension. Although it is still early to assess its potential for further growth, so far the EAS has focused on confidence building, selecting themes which offer high chances for win-win solutions: non-traditional security issues (such as terrorism and illicit trafficking), education, pollution, disaster management, and the prevention of infectious diseases. More controversial themes, such as the RCEP, are also touched upon. However, in the economic and financial field, the EAS still plays a secondary role compared to APT. Despite reiterated declarations on the «need to further consolidate and strengthen the EAS» as a «leaders-led forum for dialogue and cooperation on broad strategic, political and economic issues» (EAS FMM 2013), its present relationship with APT differs deeply with the one once envisioned by Tokyo:

> Japan regards EAS as the forum for discussing in general and strategic terms the fundamentals of regional cooperation and approaches to it. On the other hand, at the ASEAN+3 leaders’ meetings, discussions should focus on the practicalities of cooperation (Embassy of Japan in the UK 2005, `http://www.uk.emb-japan.go.jp/en/news/east_asia.html`).

18 This expression became popular after appearing in an article by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (2011). However, a renewed interest in East Asia has been a characteristic of the Obama administration since an early phase.

19 For the full text of the speech, see «Text of Obama’s Tokyo Address» 2009, `http://blogs.wsj.com/washwire/2009/11/13/text-of-obamas-tokyo-address/`.

The opinion prevailing among Japan's partners in Asia, instead, has been recently reaffirmed in another report to APT leaders by the East Asia Vision Group II (EAVG II). Established in October 2011 with the purpose of reviewing fifteen years of APT cooperation and outlining long-term objectives for the future, this group of government officials and academics has proposed a number of measures aiming at the formation of an East Asia Economic Community by 2020. Concerning institutional dialogue, it has recommended upholding as guiding principle

> the mutually reinforcing and complementary roles of the APT process, the main vehicle for regional community building and such regional fora as the East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) to promote community building in East Asia (EAVG II 2012, p. 6).

Therefore, the EAS is seen as just one of the several frameworks that interact with APT.

One crucial question for the future of regional integration is whether ASEAN will remain able to hold the balance among all these overlapping structures. Unity within ASEAN is a prerequisite, but in 2012 tensions surged as discussion turned on territorial disputes in the South China Sea. For the first time in the Association's history, the FMM held in July failed to produce a joint communiqué. Later at the EAS, President Obama's appeal to pursue a solution in accordance with international law prompted China's annoyed reaction; host Cambodia took sides with Beijing by claiming that ASEAN had agreed not to raise the issue in a multilateral frame, only to be blatantly rebuked by the Philippines' President («Kurōzu appu 2012» 2012; Prak, Grudgings 2012). Despite some recent signs of détente (ASEAN 2013, para. 34), disputed maritime borders remain a serious obstacle to regionalism in the political-security sphere.[20] Nevertheless, given the overarching interest of all parties to keep engaged in regional initiatives, it is unlikely that these contrasts will escalate to the point of jeopardising the general progress of cooperation. ASEAN can retain centrality only if it avoids an internal rift; at the same time, the larger powers are willing to accept ASEAN as a guarantor of the equilibrium, because none of them has a decisive advantage over its main competitors. A prudent prediction on long-term developments, then, would be that the present regional architecture will maintain its multi-layered structure around the ASEAN core, without the rise of any one country to a hegemonic position. Rather than following cycles between two poles, it can be expected that frameworks will operate in parallel, each specialising in the functions that can be carried

20 For a comprehensive review of the problem, see Koo 2009.

out most effectively in their respective geopolitical range. There is a wide margin for the further advance of functional cooperation on a step-by-step basis. However, it must be pointed out that the process is still a long way from reaching the stage of consolidation under supra-national institutions. The EAVG II report begins with a disclaimer:

> [T]he term 'East Asia Economic Community' will be and remain an inter-governmental entity. It does not mean or imply that members of this community would be required to transfer any competence to any entity that may be created by the community. (EAVG II 2012, p. 1, `http://www.mfa.go.th/asean/contents/files/asean-media-center-20130312-112418-758604.pdf`)

It could be argued that a community where no member is willing to sacrifice a speck of its own prerogatives for the sake of group cohesion is suffering from a lack of common purpose. Indeed, although the economy has so far proven a powerful catalyst, under the present political conditions, the possibility of East Asia stepping beyond its 'soft' regionalism to achieve a tighter form of integration still looks remote. In this respect, for a better understanding of the Japanese position it may be useful to briefly review how successive governments in Tokyo have dealt with the concept of an 'East Asian community' (*Higashi Ajia kyōdōtai*) in the last decade.

A few months after the EAVG issued its report, Prime Minister Koizumi Jun'ichirō (2001-2006) concluded a diplomatic tour of South East Asia with a visit to Singapore. There he delivered a speech that, moving from Japan-ASEAN relations, addressed the topic of broader regional cooperation:

> our goal should be the creation of a «community that acts together and advances together». And we should achieve this through expanding East Asia cooperation founded upon the Japan-ASEAN relationship. [...] The first step is to make the best use of the framework of ASEAN+3. [...] I expect that the countries of ASEAN, Japan, China, the Republic of Korea, Australia and New Zealand will be the core members of such a community. The community I am proposing should be by no means an exclusive entity. Indeed, practical cooperation in the region would be founded on close partnership with those outside the region. In particular, the role to be played by the United States is indispensable because of its contribution to regional security and the scale of its economic interdependence with the region. Japan will continue to enhance its alliance with the United States. Cooperation with Southwest Asia, including India, is also of importance, as is cooperation with the Pacific nations through APEC, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation group, and with Europe through ASEM, the Asia-Europe Meeting. APEC and ASEM are important tools to link our region to other regions (MOFA 2002, `http://www.mofa.go.jp/`

region/asia-paci/pmv0201/speech.html, original Japanese text available at http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/press/enzetsu/14/ekoi_0114.html).

This speech, which the press popularised as the manifesto of a 'Koizumi doctrine', is often cited to illustrate Japan's commitment to the principles of 'open regionalism', and its support for the Asia-Pacific model (Ōga 2009, p. 142; Hoshino 2011, p. 32). However, it can be noted that what Koizumi calls «our region» here corresponds to APT enlarged to Australia and New Zealand, while APEC serves as a bridge to «other regions». There is, in other words, a substantial difference from the vision championed by the US, which is mentioned as a close dialogue partner. The wording is carefully calibrated to reassure the US about its involvement in the process, while also expressing Japan's ambition to play an autonomous role in East Asia. Less evident, but perhaps equally important in this speech, is the connection between foreign and domestic affairs. Stressing the need for each country to have «a free and efficient market», Koizumi remarked: «I have been tackling such reform under the banner of 'structural reform without sanctuaries'. I know that no great reform is accomplished without pain and resistance». In this way, the premier reminded his fellow citizens that keeping Japan's international standing high would depend on their support for the liberalisation policies currently being pursued by the cabinet at home.

The trip to Singapore, which was also the occasion for signing Japan's first Economic Partnership Agreement, is a representative episode of the pro-active approach of the Koizumi administration to regionalism and, more in general, to foreign policy. In the following years, tangible results emerged from trade negotiations, and from the creation of the EAS. The Liberal Democratic cabinets, which served in 2006-2009, however, were too short-lived and plagued by domestic troubles to devote much energy to regionalist projects. Then, with the rise to government of the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) in September 2009, it seemed that Asia-oriented diplomacy would get new impulse. Prime Minister Hatoyama Yukio attracted attention across the world for his attempt at rebalancing: on the one hand, declaring the intention «to reconstruct a close and equal Japan-US alliance» (PMJ 2009a, http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/hatoyama/statement/200909/16policies_e.html, original Japanese text available at http://www.kantei.go.jp/jp/tyokan/hatoyama/2009/0916siryou1.pdf); on the other, that of building «an East Asian community» (PMJ 2009b, http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/hatoyama/statement/200909/ehat_0924c_e.html). The latter goal had officially been part of the Democratic platform since 2005, albeit in rather generic terms (Minshutō 2005, p. 13; 2009, pp. 8, 12).[21] Little was achieved, though, on both sides of the programme. In bilateral relations with the US, the cabinet soon ended up in an awkward position over the issue of the relocation of the Futenma Air Base in Okinawa; this blunder prevented Hatoyama from engaging in any further negotiations. As for dialogue with the Asian partners, it remained unclear how the government meant to concretely shape a 'community', aside from a declared interest in strengthening trade cooperation with China and Korea.[22] Even in this field, though, no substantive progress was made in terms of formal agreements.

After Hatoyama resigned in June 2010, the two Democratic cabinets that followed focussed their diplomatic efforts on mending relations with the US, while no major initiative was taken for regional community-building. Premier Noda Yoshihiko stated quite bluntly that, for the moment, there was «no need to set out a grand vision» («Noda Steps Back» 2011). This renewed emphasis on the US-Japan axis, which occurred against a background of mounting tension over disputed sea borders, has continued under the present administration of Liberal Democratic president Abe Shinzō. Seeking to explain why the DPJ failed to deliver on the issue of regionalism while in government, Hoshiro (2011) has pointed out as chief domestic factor the party's high dependence on socio-economic groups hostile to market liberalisation. The shift of the agricultural vote from LDP to DPJ observable in the past few elections, in particular, would have further inhibited the latter party from promoting trade integration in East Asia. With an increasing share of floating voters, it is perhaps too early to assess how changes in the social base of support are affecting party policies. However, assuming the above analysis is correct, a logical consequence would be that the return of the LDP to power will bring momentum to trade negotiations. As the Abe cabinet is currently engaged in discussion of both RCEP and TPP, there should soon be more elements for an evaluation of the actual extent of its commitment. Again, though, it is important not to forget that trade is but one aspect of regionalism. The marked nationalist character of the present administration, as apparent in its security policy (Bōeishō 2013, for a comment see Hayashi 2013), is not an encouraging premise for comprehensive cooperation.

21 The 2007 programme did not mention an East Asian community, but only the intention to «build a trust relationship with the Asian countries, starting from China and Korea» and «strengthen coordination with the Asian countries in international society» (Minshutō 2007, p. 29).

22 See, for instance, PMJ 2010, http://www.kantei.go.jp/foreign/hatoyama/statement/201003/26kaiken_e.html.

4 Conclusion

As outlined in the previous section, the geopolitical context of East Asia is fluid enough to allow Japan play an important role in regionalist projects. Notwithstanding its relative decline as an economic power, the country retains immense material and intellectual capital. With such resources, there is no need for Japan to resign itself to following in the tracks of China or the US – especially as neither of the two dominates the scene. China has been trying to win acceptance in East Asia as a benign leader, but diffidence towards it remains high; the resurgence of maritime disputes certainly has not helped to improve its international image. On the other hand, despite a renewed engagement in Asia-Pacific frameworks, the US is unlikely to recover centrality after sixteen years of APT-based integration. That said, the extent to which Japan will manage to make a positive contribution to East Asian regionalism will ultimately depend on the skills of its political leaders. One precondition for effective action, which has been missing in 2006-12, is stability in government. Having acquired a solid majority in both Houses of the Diet, the Abe cabinet is now in a position to devote adequate efforts to diplomatic initiatives. However, the premier's revisionist stand on history issues, and his eagerness to play on the China threat in order to expand the role of the Self Defense Forces hardly help in fostering that climate of mutual trust, which should underlie community building. More in general, what seems to be lacking in both major parties is a clear sense of direction. Although the flexible arrangement of frameworks for cooperation in East Asia has proven effective in achieving incremental progress, Japanese policy makers should contribute more to the articulation of this structure within an overall vision, striving to lay solid foundations for enduring stability in the region.

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Cultural Theory, Fine Art and Philosophy

Contemporary Japan
Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition

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Re-imagining 'Japan'
Beyond the Inter-national Governance of Cultural Diversity

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Abstract As evidenced by the popularity of *nihonjinron* (discourses on Japanese and Japanese culture) literature, there has been a strong tendency, both domestically and internationally, to explicate Japanese uniqueness by explaining the Japanese people and culture in essentialist terms. Japanese national/cultural identity has been constructed in an exclusive manner through its conscious self-orientalising discourse, a narrative that at once testifies to subtle exploitation of and deep complicity with the Euro-American Orientalist discourse. After the early 1990s 'Japan' has since been re-imagined under the emerging governance of an inter-national cultural connection, in which the national is considered as the unit of global cultural diversity. With the rise of the associated policy discourse of 'brand nationalism', the essentialised notion of national culture and its ownership/belonging has become even more pervasive and embraced by much of the populace. Inter-national governance of global culture promotes a particular kind of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, which does not well attend to diversity within the nation-state. This paper will critically explore how 'Japan', together with other nations, is re-imagined in an exclusive manner in this cultural governance.

Summary 1. 'Japan' and the Rise of Inter-national Governance of Cultural Diversity. – 2. Cool Japan in the Age of Glocalisation. – 3. State Collaboration for National Branding. – 4. Nation As the Unit of Global Cultural Encounters. – 5. Banal Inter-nationalism and Cultural Diversity within the Nation. – 6. Toward Collaborative Re-imagining of 'Japan'.

1 'Japan' and the Rise of Inter-national Governance of Cultural Diversity

There has been a strong interest within Japan in explicating Japanese uniqueness as evidenced by the popularity of *nihonjinron* (discourses on Japanese and Japanese culture) literature explaining Japanese people and culture in essentialist terms. Many studies show that the Japanese national/cultural identity has been constructed in an exclusive manner through its conscious self-orientalising discourse, a narrative that at once testifies to subtle exploitation of and deep complicity with the Euro-American Orientalist discourse (e.g. Befu 1987; Iwabuchi 1994). Japan is represented and represents itself as culturally and racially homogeneous, and uniquely particularistic by way of a strategic binary opposition between two imaginary cultural entities, 'Japan' and 'the West'.

Such discourses gained increasing currency during the decade after Japan's ascent to economic superpower. This was a period when the nationalist term *kokusaika* (internationalisation) became prevalent in Japan. The Japanese government and companies devoted themselves to furthering Japan's national interests through competition with their foreign counterparts in the international arena. This process accompanied a drastic increase in opportunities for the Japanese populace to encounter foreign (predominantly Euro-American) people and cultures both outside and inside Japan. Backed by a strong Japanese economy and the relative decline of American power, the self-Orientalist *nihonjinron* literature became a popular commodity allowing the Japanese populace to confidently explain the distinctive characteristics of Japanese culture and society without undermining a definite demarcation between us and them.

While this complicity has never disappeared, the collapse of the so-called bubble economy and subsequent social downfall of Japan after the early 1990s put an end to such internationalist *nihonjinron* discourses. The last decade of the twentieth century, called *ushinawareta nijūnen* (the lost two decades), witnessed the decisive structural deterioration of Japanese institutions such as its bureaucracy, corporate organisation, education system, and family relationships. In addition to a prolonged economic recession, a series of incidents with a negative social impact including the Kōbe earthquake, an increasing number of brutal crimes by teenagers, and the nerve gas attacks in the Tokyo railway system perpetrated by the Aum Shinrikyo (Supreme Truth Sect) have further deepened the sense of crisis and pessimistic view of the future among the populace. While the lack of confidence in Japan's economic power and social harmony severely damaged the validity and usefulness of *nihonjinron* discourses, this did not signal the end of Japanese nationalistic discourses. On the contrary, in this context, nationalistic discourses have taken various forms but no longer claim cultural distinctiveness and superiority founded on economic power. Various attempts have been made to (re)discover the merit and virtue of Japan: nostalgia for past glory, reactive discourses that aim to revise history textbooks to counter the 'self-tormenting' view of Japan's modern history of imperialism and colonialism in Asia, the state's emphasis on teaching Japanese children more about their traditions and instilling patriotic sentiments, and excessive celebratory attention to Japanese people (sports players in particular) who succeed outside Japan. Indeed, the 1990s have proven to be the decade of the upsurge of neo-nationalism.

At the same time, it should be noted that while eroding national boundaries, globalisation processes also re-enhance the sense of belonging to a national community. This is closely related to the prevailing governance of global culture connectivity, which props up the resilience of the national framework with the development of inter-nationalism. It has been argued that transnational cultural flows and connections do not displace the significance of the nation but rather highlight its reworking (e.g. Hannerz 1996). What has become conspicuous is the rise of inter-national governance of media culture connectivity, in which the national is considered as the unit of global cultural encounter, and national cultures are mutually consumed in various inter-nationalised cultural occurrences. As I will discuss later, inter-national governance is not just market-driven but also endorsed by the state's mounting interest in national branding to opportunistically administer media culture for the enhancement of political and economic national interests. With the penetration of inter-national media cultural spectacles and the rise of associated policy discourse of 'brand nationalism', the essentialised notion of national culture and its ownership/belonging has become even more pervasive and embraced by much of the populace. Inter-national governance of global culture promotes a particular kind of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, which does not well attend to diversity within the nation-state. This paper will critically explore how 'Japan', together with other nations, is re-imagined in this cultural governance in an exclusive manner. It will be suggested that we researchers urgently need to advance a more open re-imagination of the nation that does justice to cultural diversity within and across the nation by promoting cross-border collaboration and dialogue on various levels.

2 Cool Japan in the Age of Glocalisation

Since the collapse of the post-bubble economy in the early 1990s, Japanese economic power has experienced a constant decline, a dire situation that was further highlighted by the rise of other Asian economies such as China and India in the new millennium. Yet the same period also saw the dramatic spread of Japanese media culture in the world (specifically including Europe and the US). The diffusion of Japanese media culture in the world has a long history, but has become much more conspicuous in the past decade as several commentators of Euro-American media have attested to Japan's increasing cultural influence, the 'cool Japan' phenomenon: «Japan is reinventing itself on earth – this time as the coolest nation culture» («Japan's Empire of Cool», 2003). Coining the term GNC (Gross National Cool), one journalist even proposed that Japan had acquired the status of cultural super-power in the international arena (McGray 2002).

This sort of Euro-American attention eventually gave credence to a celebratory discourse of 'cool Japan' within Japan. The rise of the 'cool Japan' discourse, it can be argued, still testifies that Euro-American appreciation has a determining power with regard to the international quality of Japanese culture, as was the case with traditional cultural genres such as ukiyoe (pictures of the floating world). In fact, although East and Southeast Asian markets are far more receptive to Japanese cultures in terms of scale and variety at least since 1980s, this has not inspired the same extent of euphoria. In this sense, 'cool Japan' is a Euro-American phenomenon, illustrating the lingering cultural hegemony of the West, at least in the Japanese context (see Iwabuchi 1994).

However, the rise of 'cool Japan' discourse in Japan is characterised by some important innovations. The global spread of Japanese media culture and associated discourses on 'cool Japan' should be understood in the context of the intensification of global governance of cultural production, marketing and circulation, which is organised by the interplay of neoliberal marketization of culture and a collaborative state policy that endorses it. Under such an ordering of cultural globalisation, cultural flows and encounters have come to be promoted and comprehended in an inter-national framework – 'inter-national' in the sense that the intensification of cross-border media culture flows strengthens both nation-to-nation relations and rivalry. I would suggest that 'cool Japan' be symptomatically read as the rise of cultural inter-nationalism in which the media cultures of various countries, including non-'Western' ones, are circulating and competing with each other as national brands.

This mounting inter-nationalism is principally promoted through two levels of 'glocalisation'. Despite the prevalent view of homogenisation or Americanisation of the world, globalisation is in reality constantly giving rise to cultural diversity (e.g. Hannerz 1996). Globally disseminated cultural products and images, many of which are made in the US, are consumed and received differently within the specific cultural framework formed by the political, economic and social contexts of each locality, and by people of differing statuses depending on their gender, ethnicity, class, age and other factors. At the same time, in each locality these products and images are reconfigured and mixed with local elements, resulting in the creation of new products that are more than mere copies. It can be argued that the intensification of cultural mixing and translation, together with the development of digital communication technologies, and the expansion of media culture markets in previously less developed regions, has formed a significant background to the rise of non-'Western' media culture in the last decade or two, of which Japanese media culture is one prominent example. However, it is crucial to remember that de-centring or de-'Westernising' processes of cultural globalisation eventually accompany a 'peculiar form of homogenisation' as they foster and promote a particular kind of diversity that is governed and structured by the logic of capital (Hall 1991). Here, as Wilk argues, cultural difference is expressed and revealed, «in ways that are more widely intelligible» through «universal categories and standards by which all cultural differences can be defined» (1995, p. 118). The world is becoming more diverse through standardisation and more standardised through diversification. Especially important in what Wilk (1995) calls «structure of common difference» are the global diffusion and sharing of cultural formats such as genre, style, code, and event – most of which 'originate' in the US and other developed countries – through which various differences are articulated in the international arena.

This process is first and foremost organised and promoted by transnational corporations, most of them based in developed countries, which pursue profits by tailoring glocal cultures in world markets through transnational tie-ups and partnerships as evinced, for example, by the case of *Pekemon* (see Tobin 2004). In this process of 'glocalised' production and marketing of cultures, the national has been functioning as one of the most profitable local markets, as a unit of commercialised cultural diversity in the world. The glocalisation process has accompanied the institutionalisation of what Urry calls a 'global screen', a site through which «localities, cultures and nations appear, to compete and mobilize themselves as international spectacles and consumed by others, compared and evaluated, and turned into a brand» (2003, p. 107). In the last two decades, we have indeed witnessed the substantial increase in the number of occasions of international media spectacle, and cultural exhibition and festival such as sports events, film festivals, TV/music awards, food expos, pageants, and tourism as well as the proliferation of satellite and cable broadcasting and audiovisual internet sites. Global mass culture formats do not just provide the basis for the expression of national cultural specificity but also work as an inter-national interface that highlights culture as national brand and urges people to conceive the nation as the unit of global cultural encounters, a point I will further discuss later.

3 State Collaboration for National Branding

Inter-nationally orchestrated glocalisation prompts, and in turn is reinforced by, the increasing interest in national branding policy, in which states are eager to take an initiative by joining forces with media culture industries. While we can agree with Urry that the conception of the nation has «significantly become more a matter of branding» in the age of cultural internationalism, this does not necessarily confirm his point that «the nation has become something of a free-floating signifier relatively detached from the 'state' within the swirling contours of the new global order» (2003, p. 87). Truly, as suggested above, the market force of cultural commodification plays a significant role in the reconstruction of national feeling, and national code is no longer unreservedly under rigid state control intended to maintain a homogeneous territory. However, we would be going too far if we entirely lose sight of the significant role of the state in effectively endorsing and institutionalising market-driven inter-nationalism, through which the symbolic re-enactment of the nation is structured.

Unlike in previous decades, Japanese embracing of 'cool Japan' in the twenty-first century has accompanied an active development of national cultural policy discussion and the establishment of numerous committees focusing on the further promotion of Japanese media and culture in the world. The key word here is 'soft power'. Joseph Nye argued, in relation to the attainment of global hegemony by the United States in the post Cold War era, «If [a dominant country's] culture and ideology are attractive, others will more willingly follow» (1990, p. 32). While the idea of using media culture for the advancement of public diplomacy is never new, its significance was revisited in a new geopolitical context after the end of the cold war in the 1990s. In the twenty-first century, the concept of 'soft power' attracted renewed attention in the face of the Bush administration's hardline policies, especially after 9/11, but this time the discussion of 'soft power' was extended to many parts of the world, including Japan. When he first advocated 'soft power', Nye dismissed Japan's soft power as negligible since no matter how globally diffused its cultures may be, Japan lacks an associated «appeal to a broader set of values» (1990, p. 32). However, more than ten years later, Nye also has come to acknowledge Japan's cultural influence in the world: «Japan's popular culture was still producing potential soft-power resources even after its economy slowed down. Now, with signs of a reviving economy, Japan's soft power may increase even more» (2005). This represents further endorsement of Japan's soft power by the American authority of the concept, intended to encourage the Japanese government to pursue a soft power policy that will enhance the country's international image of Japan through the development of media culture industries and the promotion of cultural diplomacy.

While the idea of showcasing Japanese (traditional) culture to improve Japan's image in the world has also been part of the state policy at least since the 1970s in the post-war era, Japan's soft power turn is marked by a profound market-orientation and concern with international rivalry. It is, I would argue, symptomatic of the globalisation of the 'soft power' discourse, which goes along with the expansion of inter-nationalised mode of glocalisation. As many countries other than the United States developed the capacity to produce media cultures, other states have begun, even more aggressively, to pursue the economic and political utility of media culture to win the international competition, though the term 'soft power' was not necessarily always used. 'Cool Britannia' may well be the best-known policy and practice of this kind, but in East Asia too, Korea, Singapore, China, Taiwan and Japan are keen to promote their own cultural products and industries to enhance political and economic national interests.[1]

1 The Korean government has actively promoted Korean media cultures overseas since the late 1990s, thereby contributing to the wide diffusion of Korean media cultures in Asian markets, known as the Korean Wave. See Chua, Iwabuchi 2008.

With the growing recognition of media culture as a useful resource for promoting political and economic national interests, the globalisation of soft power leads to a deviation from Nye's argument. According to Nye (2004), media culture is just one of three possible resources for the enhancement of a nation's soft power, the other two being respectful foreign policy and attractive democratic values established in the relevant society. While he warns against conflating the international appeal of media cultures with soft power, stressing that soft power will not be enhanced unless the other two resources are well developed and properly made use of, it is precisely this kind of conflation that is actually a prevalent operational principle of cultural policy discussions in many parts of the world. This is related to another important divergence from Nye's 'soft power', which is the development of cultural policy in line with the neo-liberal marketization of culture. While Nye's argument of soft power clearly distinguishes between culture as soft power and economy together with military force as hard power, the economic dimension in this use of culture is seen even more central in the era of neo-liberal globalisation, as the widespread discussion of creative industries clearly shows. Thus, globalisation of the 'soft power' discourse has highlighted a different logic of uses of media culture for national interests. I suggest that it can be better termed brand nationalism as it aims to pragmatically and opportunistically promote the production and circulation of media culture for the purposes of enhancing national images and economic profits in the international arena. Soft power and national branding policy share the basic principle of using media culture for a narrow and focused set of national interests. However, brand nationalism needs to be even more critically interrogated in terms other than soft power inasmuch as what have been widely institutionalised are not just opportunistic discourses on the uses of media culture but also a highly market-centred vision of cultural policy. Brand nationalism straightforwardly and uncritically relies on and legitimises the neoliberal marketisation of culture, and institutionalises the inter-nationalised glocalisation of media culture, whereby national identity is reconceived in a non-inclusive manner that disregards issues of cultural difference and marginalised voices within the nation.

4 Nation As the Unit of Global Cultural Encounters

The interplay between the marketisation of media cultures and state policies has widely disseminated and institutionalised the conception of the nation as a powerful brand unit of global cultural encounters. This introduces a sense of national belonging as well as an essentialist conception of national culture. In branding national culture in the international market, widely known stereotypical images and touristic icons of traditional culture such as samurai spirit, sushi or Kyoto are often reused to make a distinction. This again shows a shallow, kitsch appropriation of traditional culture for commercial purposes but also engenders an essentialist delineation of national culture and its ownership. In explaining the global popularity of Japanese comics, animations and otaku culture, historically inherited national cultural essence is often mentioned. Edo culture of the eighteenth century, for example, is said to be the root of the contemporary Japanese cool cultures, and the need to reevaluate Japanese traditional cultural sensitivities and aesthetics is proposed in order to further promote 'cool Japan' and enhance Japan's soft power (cf. Okuno 2007). Hence a growing interest in promoting cool Japanese culture in the world instigates racialised discourses that evoke Japan's distinctive cultural aesthetics, styles and tastes with the metaphor of the 'cultural gene' or 'cultural DNA'. As a policy maker of the Japan Brand project states, it is necessary to re-define 'Japan' and to seriously consider how Japanese cultural DNA can be properly discerned and strategically standardised in order to successfully input it into Japanese products and services.[2] However, this ahistorical conception of the nation as organic cultural entity fails to bear in mind that national boundaries are discursively drawn in a way that suppresses various socio-cultural differences within, disavowing their existence as constitutive of the nation. Although this way of constructing national identity is always constitutive of modern nation-state building, the intensifying inter-national cultural encounters and competitions now play a more significant role in it, and the exclusive notion of national ownership of culture has become even more prevalent.

Market-oriented aspiration for national branding subtly facilitates the re-demarcation of 'core' national culture and racialises its ownership in the name of national interests to win in situations of international rivalry. The promotion of cultural production is an important cultural policy as not only does it put forward a commercially viable cultural production but, more crucially, it introduces various cultural expressions and creativities into the public space that reflect hitherto marginalised interests, practices and voices of diverse members of society. However, brand nationalism actually disengages this focal rationale. There has long been considerable cultural diversity within Japan: in addition to long-standing ethnic minorities such as resident Koreans and indigenous people, the Ainu, in the late 1980s a strong Japanese economy attracted many foreign labourers and migrants. International marriages have recently come to constitute about 5% of newly married couples each year, nationally; in Tokyo, it is about one out of ten. Furthermore, the sharp decline of the birth rate is so serious that more

2 «Kūru Japan tte, nani??» 2009, http://blogs.yahoo.co.jp/hiromi_ito2002jp/57705983.html. See also «Kūru Japan o sekai ni urikome!» 2010, http://www.kanto.meti.go.jp/seisaku/uec_lec/data/lec01_kouen_22fy.pdf.

intake of foreign labour is an urgent matter for the Japanese economy. The number of foreign-nationals residing in Japan currently amounts to more than two million people, and if we include those who were naturalised and those Japanese nationals who have mixed ancestries, the racially and ethnically diverse constitution of society is much more noticeable.

Thus, Japan is undoubtedly a multicultural society, and multicultural situations will be intensifying. While policy makers have belatedly begun discussing the selective acceptance of foreign labourers – though the term 'migration' is not yet being officially used – and some Japanese ministries have recently started putting the issue of *tabunka kyōsei* (multicultural co-living) on the national agenda, it lags far behind the multicultural reality in terms of the fair recognition of cultural differences, and the development of related educational curriculums, anti-racism campaign, and media services that provide more spaces for diverse concerns and voices. There has yet to be any serious attempt on national level to develop cultural policy that does justice to and soundly responds to existing cultural diversity (Iwabuchi 2010). This is in a sharp contrast to the rapid progress of the cultural policy for national branding, which endorses the pragmatic uses of culture for narrow-focused national interests and does not include any aspects of socio-cultural democratization, disengaging with multicultural situations within Japan.

In early 2006, for example, the first serious discussions took place on the expansion of international broadcasting services in Japan, followed in February 2009 by the launch of these services intended to enhance Japan's national image in the world and promote the country's political and economic interests. However, these discussions originally arose in response to complaints to the then Prime Minister Koizumi by foreign nationals residing in Japan about the lack of diversity in broadcasting in Japan. What was initially on the table was the failure of the Japanese broadcasting system to provide due public service to people of diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds residing in Japan. The question of the broadcasting system's publicness, in the sense of doing justice to the diversity of citizens whose voices and concerns are not well reflected in the mass media, is indeed an urgent one inasmuch as Japanese society is becoming more multicultural. However, in the cabinet meeting a few days later, these concerns were translated into a strategy aimed at the enhancement of the national image in the world through the development of an English language international broadcasting service. Here the preoccupation with national branding is clearly at odds with cultural policy's vital task of bringing the hitherto marginalised voices and concerns of various citizens into the public sphere and of ensuring that they are heard. Brand nationalism effectively suppresses serious discussions about significant cultural issues in the service of wider public interests, glossing over who owns culture and whose cultures and voices are being marginalised (Couldry 2010).

5 Banal Inter-nationalism and Cultural Diversity within the Nation

Increased opportunities for international cultural encounters makes it easier for the penetration of the sense of national identity to take a less assertive, 'banal' form (Billig 1995). And the fragmentation of national community and intensification of transnational cultural connections caused by globalisation processes give further significance to the banal sense of the national being explicated in the inter-national framework. The increase in encounters with people, goods and media cultures from many parts of the world re-inscribes the existence of national cultural boundaries in the public debate. This only works to make the banality of the nation more solid, engendering banal inter-nationalism, to follow Billig's term 'banal nationalism'. Banal inter-nationalism understands cross-cultural encounters and cultural diversity as those between mutually exclusive national cultures, with the entrenched infiltration of a conception that the global is the congregation of nations. This comprehension is based on a container model of territorialised national cultures, and thus the principle idea of methodological nationalism, «the self-evidence of a world ordered into nation-states» (Wimmer, Shiller 2002, p. 325), is no longer just an academic matter but has deeply permeated people's minds and mundane practices through the amplification of «reciprocal, international recognition» (Beck 2006, p. 28). The increase in the number of international occasions in which people are encouraged to participate by displaying a particular national flag and to feel a sense of belonging to a particular nation is accompanied by a sense of national pride when 'our' national cultures do well. Or by a sense of regret, anger and frustration when others beat 'us'. As previously mentioned, due to the decline of the Japanese economy, the international standing of Japanese culture has become an important resource for the evocation of national pride. A 2010 survey on the aspects of Japan people are proud of showed that while Japan's technology and traditional culture were still conceived as the most significant, 90% of respondents in their 20s and 80% of those in their 30s stated that they were proud of Japan's soft power such as anime and computer games («Poll: 95% Fear for Japan's Future» 2010).

It can be argued that this only displays a trivial, transient consumption of and identification with the idea of the nation, lacking the substantial meanings of the narrative of the nation. Fox argues, in his examination of the rise of nationalist sentiment through national holiday commemorations and international football competitions, that participation in such occasions certainly whips up the sense of national belonging, but this does not automatically mean an actual surge of nationalism: «while holidays and sports had the capacity to make the students national, there is little to suggest that they made them nationalist. Indeed, student indifference to nationalist politics more generally […] suggests that any experience of collective belonging neither led to nor followed from heightened nationalist sensitivities» (2006, p. 232). His point is a rather significant reminder for us to avoid reaching facile conclusions about the rise of nationalism in the age of global interconnectedness without closely analysing the complexity of people's participation in the inter-nationalised cultural fiesta. Similarly, during the FIFA World Cup Soccer championship in 2002, which was co-hosted by Korea and Japan, some observed the rise of 'petit nationalism' in Japan (Kayama 2002). For the first time since their defeat in World War II, people in Japan (especially young people) cheerfully and innocently rejoiced at being Japanese: they openly waved the national flag, painted it on their faces, and sang together the national anthem that praises the emperor's everlasting rule – conducts that had long been somewhat restrained in the public space as they were considered a negative reminder of Japanese imperialism. Such practices attracted much discussion in Japan as some considered this a potentially dangerous expression that could easily lead to an exclusive cultural nationalism. However, this phenomenon should not be automatically interpreted as the rise of a fanatical nationalism since the survey shows that only a small portion of young Japanese feel a sense of pride in their country.[3] In a presentation about nationalist sentiment among young people in Japan participating in international cultural events and observing the ascent of Japanese culture in the world, university students argue, based on their own research finding that: «Japanese nationalism is a fashion statement. It is something like owning a brand commodity. People do not care about the origin, history meaning and value of the ideas of 'Japan'».[4] This attests to the rise of superficial, content-less identification with the nation as brand form, engendered by inter-nationalised glocalisation. As Fox rightly argues, we need to distinguish between national cohesion and nationalist passion: «national content does not follow unambiguously from national form» (2006, p. 232).

However, although not showing chauvinistic aggression, the cheerful approval of nation form as brand in an international arena is not totally trifling if we take seriously Wilk's argument that the hegemony of the global cultural system is «not of content, but of form». It is a mode of cultural hegemony that «celebrate[s] particular kinds of diversity while submerging, deflating or suppressing others» (1995, p. 118). As suggested earlier,

3 For example, in a public opinion survey, only 15% of respondents feel that way. Even when people express their sense of patriotism, this can be an expression of self-critical attachment to the nation. According to a survey conducted in 2007, 78% of respondents said «yes» to «I have a strong or moderate sense of patriotism». This is a substantial increase in the sense of patriotism, but at the same time, among those people, 85% agreed upon the need to be critical of Japan's colonial history. This suggests the possibility of critical patriotism arising: the stronger the sense of patriotism, the more critical of Japan's colonial history.

4 Kansai Gakuin University students' presentation at Cultural Typhoon Shimokitazawa, 1 July 2006.

glocalisation organises cultural diversity through form, and the national is constituted as a highly commercialised brand form in the process. And this globally shared form of the nation as brand highlights cultural difference and diversity in an inter-nationalised manner, suppressing other kinds of difference, especially those within the nation.

Banal inter-nationalism that 'makes people national' also risks further marginalising voices and multicultural situations within the nation that are already excluded, while overtly highlighting them in a particular manner. The rise of banal inter-nationalism, for example, works to make growing multicultural situations traded with a mediated inter-national spectacle that represents cultural diversity as one between nations. Migrants and ethnic minorities are encouraged to express their difference in public as long as they show a sign of belonging to other nations, a sign assuring that they will never be full members of the nation even if they have a Japanese passport (Iwabuchi 2005). Mediated inter-national spectacle thus encourages people to cheerfully consume cultural diversity within Japan in a way that renders the issue of inclusion/exclusion in the Japanese imagined community irrelevant. A more pertinent case to be considered here is how the inter-national consumption of media culture produced in a particular nation intersects with the social recognition of diasporas and migrants with links to that nation. This addresses the complicated question of whether and how the rise of their 'home' culture empowers diasporas and migrants. Researchers of Asian-Australian studies (Kwok, Khoo, Ling 2004) expressed a wishful view that the persisting stereotypical Orientalist images of the Chinese and other Asian diaspora in Australia would decline as Australia becomes economically and culturally more reliant on Asian countries. It might be the case that the rise of the Chinese economy would not just improve international images of China but also enhance social recognition of those diasporas and migrants living outside China who identify themselves and are identified as 'Chinese' in the host society. However, the empowerment of diasporas through their association with the positive images of the home country is precarious as the issues concerning their identities and differences that are contextualised 'here' tend to be effortlessly understood via the (positive) perception of culture and people over 'there'.

An inter-nationalised media culture consumption overwhelming and suppressing local multicultural politics is illustrated by the way in which the consumption of Korean media cultures impinged on the social recognition of resident Koreans who have been long suffering from discrimination as ethnic minorities in Japan.[5] Since the mid-1990s, media culture circulation and connections within East Asian countries has been escalating. This has engendered co-production and co-promotion of various media cultures as

5 For a detailed analysis of the aforementioned, see Iwabuchi 2008.

well as people's mutual understandings. Furthermore, mundane consumption of media cultures of other East Asian countries has also advanced self-reflexive attitudes to rethinking one's own life, society and relation to other Asians (cf. Iwabuchi 2002, 2004). In the Japanese context, this propensity is most clearly illustrated by the consumption of Korean media cultures. Positive reception of Korean media cultures in Japan has greatly facilitated self-reflexive views of self/other relations among audiences. According to a survey in Japan (Hayashi 2004), nearly 60% of respondents said that, after watching Korean TV dramas, they have a better image of Korea, realising how their images of Korea were biased, and about 40% said that they became more willing to learn about political and historical issues between Japan and Korea. Furthermore, 25% said that they became more interested in the issues of resident Koreans in Japan. With audiences' impressions about Korea appearing to be positively changing, the survey also suggests that an approving consumption of Korean media cultures has improved the image of resident Koreans in Japan. Although Koreans' issues had been long neglected in the public sphere, Japanese mass media, including TV drama series, have also began dealing with their voices and identity issues more often than before (Iwabuchi 2008).

However, there is an uncritical muddling up of the people and culture of Korea with the lives and experiences of resident Koreans in Japan, most of whom were born and brought up in Japan. The enhancement of the images of resident Koreans in the public space has been achieved principally within the framework of inter-national media consumption at the expense of advancing the recognition of resident Koreans as constitutive citizens of Japanese society. While the progress of media and cultural connections between the two countries compels a positive reconsideration of Japan-Korea national and cultural borders, the stress on inter-national cultural exchange between the two countries, both in the social discourse and in the perception of audiences, tends to overlook the complication of the in-between-ness that resident Koreans have experienced and struggled with in Japanese society. The positive reception of the Korean media culture tends to engender a naïve conflation of the lives and experiences of resident Koreans in Japan with the culture and people of present Korea, causing them to be perceived and represented as 'Korean nationals living in Japan'. The recognition of Korean residents as fellow citizens living together in Japan is subsumed by their recognition as those belonging to another nation 'over there'. As a corollary to this, the historically constituted discrimination and identity distress that many resident Koreans have been experiencing in Japan is not well understood, and their differences have not been as fully recognised as those of citizens belonging to Japanese society. These considerations highlight the difficulties involved and the necessity to go beyond a nation-centric framework. Inter-nationalised media culture circulation and consumption underlines cultural diversity in the world and cultural difference within the nation, while not seriously attending to multicultural and post-colonial questions.

6 Toward Collaborative Re-imagining of ‘Japan’

While globalisation processes have been drastically facilitating transnational flows and connections of capital, media culture and people, this does not necessarily displace or reconfigure the national boundaries in an open way. The Japanese case shows how the promotion of cross-border circulation of media culture eventually functions in ways that clearly re-demarcate national cultural borders with the intensification of the inter-national governance of cultural diversity. There is a pressing need to connect diverse voices, concerns and problems in various, unevenly overlapping public sites, in which the national is the major site but does not take over the public interests. Since the imagination of the nation is being shaped within an international cultural arena more than ever before, this can only be achieved by developing transnational collaboration among scholars in many parts of the world. We need to make an extra effort to create more public spaces and opportunities facilitating cross-border dialogues across various divides that will contribute to the construction of an inclusive society – locally, nationally, regionally, and globally. This requires researchers to pursue the active role of coordinating among and working collaboratively with various social subjects such as governments, the mass media, activists, cultural creators, NGO/NPOs and all citizens and groups who are divided by multiple boundaries, with a commitment to participation in a cross-border dialogue focussing on imperative media and cultural issues.

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Towards Critical Occidentalism Studies
Re-inventing the 'West' and 'Japan' in *Mangaesque* Popular Cultures

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Abstract This paper investigates the reproduction of the imagined geography of the 'West' in contemporary Japan by employing a relational, intersectional and positional approach in order to examine Occidentalism and its hegemonic identification and othering process. Particular attention will be paid to emerging Japanese subcultures enacting a parodic and sexualised re-invention of Westernness and Japaneseness within a globalising *mangaesque* media mix.

Summary 1. Introduction. – 2. Towards Critical Occidentalism Studies. – 3. Occidentalism, Orientalism, Self-Orientalism and 'Japan'. – 4. The Emergence of *Mangaesque* Pop Nationalism. – 5. *Moe* Nation Anthropomorphism. – 6. The Boom of *Axis Powers Hetalia*. – 7. Eurocentric Cartography and Gendered Whiteness. – 8. Sexualised Parody. – 9. Conclusion: (Un)doing Occidentalism.

1 Introduction

The main aim of this study[1] is to critically address the hegemonic range of Occidentalism in contemporary Japan, by referring to the re-negotiation and re-articulation of cultural identity in relation to the imagined geography of the 'West'. Inspired by Antonio Gramsci's notion of hegemony (Gramsci 1929-1935), this process will be firstly investigated by introducing a tentative theory on the relational, intersectional and positional dynamics between Occidentalism, Orientalism and self-Orientalism. Furthermore, in contrast to prevailing studies on power limited to the examination of institutionalised military, politics, economics, culture, etc., Gramsci's foundational project

1 This study is part of a broader research project entitled *Beyond the 'West' and the 'East': Occidentalism, Orientalism and Self-Orientalism in Italy-Japan Relations* (BETWATE) conducted at Ca' Foscari University of Venice (Miyake 2011-2013). It has been funded by the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme FP7-PEOPLE-2010-IIF under Grant Agreement no. PIIF-GA-2010-275025. Additional revisions to its first version presented at the international conference «Contemporary Japan» (25 October 2011) has been carried out within the research project entitled *Critical Occidentalism Studies* (CRITOC) funded by the Ca' Foscari Research Fellowship (2014-2015).

presented in his *Quaderni del Carcere* (1929-1935) aimed at investigating the «popular creative spirit». This has not only resulted in a more inclusive, complex and dynamic theory on hegemony; it has also contributed to the increasing recognition of investigating popular cultures as a strategic site for the re-production of any hegemony in modern and contemporary societies in order to understand hegemonic effectiveness as a dynamic balance of coercion and consent.

Accordingly, the second part of this study will explore new affective investment in Westernness and Japaneseness in the spheres of emerging mediascapes and youth subcultures, as exemplified by the so-called *moe* (a particular kind of 'adorable', 'cute') nation anthropomorphism: the parodic personification of entire nations as cute sexualised girls/boys, which has become highly popular in the last decade in both male-oriented *otaku* (fan of anime and manga) and female-oriented *fujoshi* (fan of male-male romance narrative) subcultures.

This paper suggests that the continuing fascination, or obsession, with the 'West' expressed in these urban subcultures, and their influence on the *mangaesque* aesthetic informing the wider trans-medial platform of manga, anime and videogames, plays a crucial role in the re-invention of 'Japan'. The *mangaesque* convergence of the globalising Japanese media mix has not only become one of the main governmental resources of brand nationalism in the 'Cool Japan' policy but also the perceptual frame through which 'Japan' is popularised both internally as well as externally among international 'J-culture' fandom.

2 Towards Critical Occidentalism Studies

In the modern age Occidentalism as a cumulative constellation of discourses, emotions, practices, and institutions based upon the idea of the so-called 'West' has played a hegemonic role in the configuration of collective identity and alterity. The imagined geography of the 'West' opposed to the 'East', or the 'Rest', has been one of the most effective in inscribing the whole world and humanity along hierarchic and fluid lines of inclusion and exclusion, encompassing global relations of power in geopolitical contexts, and spatialising knowledge practices in geocultural spheres (Gramsci 1929-1935; Hall 1992; Coronil 1996).

Accordingly Occidentalism will be considered in this study as:

1) a collective identification and othering process within asymmetrical power relations on a global scale that was foundational to Eurocentric modernity and subjectivity, beginning with Europe's colonial expansion in the late fifteenth century, and whose influence extended to the America-centric modernity of the twentieth century, (from a diachronic or historical perspective);

2) the whole network of signifying practices shaping the so-called 'West' in terms of identity and alterity. Every kind of discourse, emotion, practice or institution contributes to the idea of the existence of something as the 'West' opposed to the 'East', or something as 'Western' or 'Eastern', setting aside whether it is a pro-Western/pro-Eastern or anti-Western/anti-Eastern discourse, or a Euro-American or non-Euro-American discourse (from a synchronic or socio-cultural perspective).

Building upon point 1 and 2, Occidentalism is basically configured by the following key aspects:

- *colonialism*: the historical expansion of Euro-American countries across the whole world;
- *capitalism*: the political economy of this expansion;
- *modernity*: the socio-cultural mode of this expansion;
- *whiteness*: the racialised distinction of its main actors
- *West*: the civilisational identity or collective name given to the hegemonic institutions, actors and cultures of the whole process.

In contrast to the prevailing studies on Occidentalism in the last decades (Carrier 1995; Chen 2002; Buruma, Margalit 2004), this study is based on the assumption that Occidentalism is not limited to a simple inverted- or counter-Orientalism, used as anti-European or anti-American ideology by Islamist fundamentalists or Chinese and Japanese nationalists. Instead, Occidentalism is considered more radically as the condition enabling the very possibility of Orientalism and self-Orientalism (Coronil 1996; Bonnett 2004; Dietze et al. 2009; Miyake 2010, 2014). In spite of the pervasive impact of modern and contemporary Occidentalism on the global scale, paradoxically, there is still no unified field of systematic academic investigation into the 'West' as a concept (Heller 2007), creating a kind of blind spot in present day Humanities and Social Sciences. Occidentalism still continues to be examined through a body of unrelated works, and mainly relying on essentialist or substantivalist assumptions. It is still methodological civilisationalism, nationalism and culturalism, that informs to a large extent the most widespread and influential publications on the 'West', such as the case of Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996) or Niall Ferguson's *Civilization: The West and the Rest* (2011). This contributes to the mystifying and ongoing conflation, in some cases as a kind of fetish even in postcolonial theory as pointed out by Neil Lazarus (2004), between the 'West' as an ideal-type concept or a historical, ideological and cultural construct, on the one hand, and the West – referred to without inverted commas – as a civilisational essence or empirical entity bestowed with subjective agency, on the other.

This study suggests that Occidentalism has been and still is a sort of epistemological unconscious, configuring the fundamental assumptions for constructing collective identity and alterity. In this sense, insufficient understanding and a lack of critical examination regarding the complex processuality of modern Occidentalism is functional to the reproduction even today of the imagined geography of the 'West' and the 'East'. In other words, Occidentalism as an influential matrix of intelligibility, even in the absence or decrease of direct coercion, continues to be effective in articulating the ideas of both the 'West' and the 'East' as a widespread, self-evident and naturalised existence, and, therefore, reproducing Occidentalism as an almost invisible and unquestioned hegemony in different periods and in widely different regions and socio-cultural spheres.

3 Occidentalism, Orientalism, Self-Orientalism and 'Japan'

The critical approach adopted in this investigation builds partly upon Edward Said's seminal work on Orientalism (Said 1978) but is mostly inspired by the notion of hegemony elaborated by Antonio Gramsci. Actually it is his *Quaderni del carcere* that stands out for the pioneering questioning of the very concept of the 'West' as an epistemological category, as well as for the revealing suggestion that Orientalism, and Japanese self-Orientalism in particular, is a consequence of modern Eurocentric hegemony (Gramsci 1929-1935, pp. 1419-1420). Although Gramsci only occasionally reflected upon the concept of a Eurocentric imagined geography, and never used the terms 'Occidentalism' or 'Orientalism', his indication becomes particularly useful in the context of this paper, integrating it with his more fully expressed notion of hegemony: a dynamic balance of material coercion and cultural consent by means of a historical and mutually articulated process enacted by different social groups. This implies, among others, that there can be no effective hegemony, without the active consent by the subaltern sides. By applying this perspective both to the global context of inter-national relations between nation-states, as well as to intra-national societal relations within nations, it becomes clear that Occidentalism, in order to become effective, is reducible neither to one-sided imperialist rule or ideology exercised by dominant actors within the broader capitalistic world order nor to unilateral repression suffered by those who are dominated against their own interests. Instead, Occidentalism as hegemony is the highly relational, and even complicit, process enacted jointly by the dominant and the subaltern sides and ultimately leads to its reproduction even without its imposition by force.[2]

The key to the effectiveness of this epochal hegemony is the mutual processuality of Occidentalism intermingling with both Orientalism and

2 In contrast to substantivalist theory, which considers individuals as self-subsistent actors capable of social interaction, relational theory focuses on the individual's transactional contexts and reciprocal relations (Emirbayer 1997).

self-Orientalism, which can be summed up as follows. In the modern age Occidentalism has been a self-definition as the 'West', first in Europe and then in the United States, that is articulated via intertwined paradigms aimed at defining its identity as modern: universalism, reason, science, progress, individualism, masculinity, the white race, adulthood, technology, etc. Like any kind of hegemonic identity, it is not limited to an isolated or homogeneous paradigm. Occidentalism relies on its ability to intersect very different axes of social-cultural identification regarding nation, class, race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, etc.[3] On the intra-national level within societal relations, this cumulative intersectionality is what enables Occidentalism to mobilise and to be sustained at the same time by very different modes of representation, practice and emotion, cross-cutting institutionalised and highly formalised knowledge as well as popular and everyday common sense. This leads it to finally permeate every dimension of human existence, ultimately resulting in its most effective form: self-evidence, naturalisation and, eventually, invisibility.

As Said has shown, this Eurocentric self-definition has been configured within global asymmetrical power relations resulting in the hierarchic othering process known as Orientalism. Depending on context and period, the non Euro-American subaltern could be defined as the 'East', the 'Rest', 'Islam', 'Asia', 'Africa' or even a single nation-state and its people as 'Japan' and the 'Japanese'. It is Orientalism as a process of contrastive and explicit othering that has contributed in modern age to shape, by binary opposition, Euro-American identity, enabling the very idea of 'West' to remain in many cases implicit or unmarked as the universal norm. If we consider the principle of the binary construction of meaning, than the *marked particular* is what enables the *unmarked universal* to be defined as such (Iwabuchi 1994, italics by the Author). In other words, if unmarked identification with the 'West' relies basically on the idea, or desire, of being the exclusivist author and owner of a superior modernity and its constituting paradigms, then the construction of the subaltern 'oriental' or 'eastern' other will be, or must be, marked as a non-Western and non-modern other. In order to make sense of Euro-American identity as universal and modern, the non Euro-American other must be configured as a cumulative intersection of tradition inspiring paradigms, such as particularism, emotionality, stasis, groupism, femininity, coloured race, infancy, nature, etc.

Under modern imperialism and capitalism, non Euro-American regions, civilizations, cultures and people have been colonised, subordinated or simply influenced, becoming available to Euro-American projections about

3 Intersectionality has been theorised since the late 1980s by Afro-American feminist sociologists in the United States in order to highlight how the axes of identity are not limited to one single level, but instead interact on multiple and interdependent levels, contributing cumulatively to systematic social inequality and discrimination (Crenshaw 1991).

what is or should be other to the ‘West’, including the unconscious removal or nostalgic desire for native Euro-American traditions and its own non-modern past. The consequence is a constant generation of ‘oriental’ others functioning as identity mirrors: to be (re)discovered and explained (academic Orientalism), to be educated and reformed (paternalistic Orientalism), to be despised and hated (racist Orientalism), to be fantasised and desired (exoticistic Orientalism).

Japan too, as in the case of any kind of Orientalism, has been marked or configured as an ‘oriental’ other in contrast to the hegemonic notion of ‘western’ identity and the paradigms of its supposed distinctive and exclusivist modernity. Even if it has never been exposed to direct Euro-American colonialism, Japan’s very origin and present existence as a modern nation-state has been established in historical conditions of limited or absent sovereignty induced by asymmetrical power relations. First, within the Unequal Treaties imposed in the second half of he nineteenth century by the United States, British Empire, Russian Empire, Kingdom of the Netherlands, French colonial empire, and Kingdom of Prussia; secondly, within the United States-led Allied occupation (1945-1952) after defeat in World War II, shaping present geopolitical dependence and subalternity to the US. However, an innovative specificity of this Orientalism is induced by the unexpected intrusion of Japan in world history not only as an Asian nation-state undergoing rapid modernisation, but also as the first to threat en the Euro-American monopoly of modernity, resulting in a specific double Orientalism of Japan.

One part of this Euro-American othering process is the classical and well-tested configuration of Japan as a place of ‘oriental’ or ‘eastern tradition’ antithetical to ‘western modernity’, generating a rich repertoire of popular icons: Shintō, Zen, samurai, geisha, tea ceremony, martial arts, mount Fuji, love for nature, bucolic community, etc. The more those icons are unilaterally selected for their potential to inspire ideas and emotions related to tradition, or even pushed far away towards an extreme and remote past, the more they become effective to affirm by contrastive and implicit dualism Euro-American identity as modern. The result is Japan as hyper-tradition: a place where selected features of archaism, classicism or feudalism tend to be so exaggerated that they seem out of time and out of space, evoking an ultimately decontextualised other, dispersed in some mythical and a-historical dimension.

The representation of past or present Japan as the quintessence of tradition becomes available for both nostalgic desire and paternalistic contempt, regardless of their apparent pro- or anti-Japanese intentions: a place of authentic, religious, aesthetic, intuitive and natural harmony, uncontaminated by the artificial contradictions of modernity, or on the contrary, a place of retarded progress and underdeveloped emancipation, eternally imprisoned by its atavistic dependence to the laws of nature, ritual formalism and mystic irrationality.

The other part of Euro-American Orientalism configuring Japan has been established as a more recent adaptation to the nation's modernisation. Japan's unexpected achievements in matters of science, technique, industry, economic prosperity throughout the late nineteenth and whole twentieth century, has brought during the peak of its economical and financial success in the 1980s, contending even US global economic primacy has brought a new form of Orientalism, known as techno-Orientalism (Morley, Robins 1995). A futuristic imagined geography shaping a place populated by robots, cyborgs, computers, nuclear devastation, *salarymen*, *yakuza*, *otaku*, cute idols, etc. This time, Japan as hyper-modernity, but pushed towards an extreme and far-away future. Techno or neo-Orientalism is a more recent othering process enacted to preserve exclusive monopoly of at least some of the most enduring and vital modern paradigms attributed to Euro-American identity, such as reason, individualism, freedom or progress. Japan as the 'eastern' or 'oriental' other, may be acknowledged as modern, or even as 'western', but only in terms of superficial, instrumental or inauthentic imitation, ultimately unaffecting a supposed deep, essential and innate otherness.

This is why within neo- or techno-Orientalism, contemporary Japan is mainly represented as a kind of dysfunctional or dystopic version of modernity or the 'West', displayed through an endless list of individual, national or ecological crises: reification of mankind to the machine (robots, cyborgs, *otaku*), urban or generational alienation (*hikikomori*, suicides, clochards), ritualised groupism and conformism to corporativism (*salarymen*), ultraviolent individualism (*yakuza*), cyber-apocalyptic religious terrorism (Aum Shinrikyō), capitalistic precariarization of apathetic youth (*freeter*), infantile consumerism and perverse entertainment (*kawaii, hentai*), racism against ethnic minorities (right-wing nationalism), devastating effects of science, technology, industrialisation (Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Fukushima), etc.

In this case, the configuration of contemporary Japan as a symbol of futuristic, but dysfunctional, modernity causing every kind of imaginable crisis, becomes available for reassuring nostalgic Orientalists that the 'real spirit' of Japan is grounded on tradition as the only guarantee of an idealised harmony; or, for presenting to paternalistic Orientalists the opportunity to judge the intrinsic limits of Japan's modernity in terms of rationality, individualism and democracy; or, for offering to postmodern Orientalists a spectacularised version for nurturing cyberpunk and apocalyptic fantasies.

However, the othering effect of this double Orientalism of Japan may be further enhanced by its mutual combination. If the 'West' and its modernity ought to be grounded on reason and is therefore more or less intelligible to rational and logical investigation, then Japan as the Far Eastern or most extreme other, must not only be very different, irrational, intuitive or mysterious, but ultimately contradictory to reason itself. Contemporary Orientalism of Japan is mostly effective not so much as unilateral reduction to an archaic nativist spirit or to a hight-tech virtual future, but as a combined articulation of these single oppositions to the 'West'. Hyper-tradition added to hyper-modernity resulting in an extreme and ambivalent contradiction: the myth of Japan as the country of every kind of imaginable and irreducible contrasts. In other words, present Orientalism of Japan is mostly effective by inducing fascination for Japan as a cultural paradox or oxymoron.

In contrast to common sense, the basic limit of classical, techno or neo-Orientalism is not that they may originate from ignorance, prejudice or discrimination, producing stereotypical, superficial or false knowledge about Japan. Every single icon of the orientalistic imagined geography may exist empirically, may be appreciated or even loved, and could be investigated systematically and rigorously, producing very 'deep' or scientific knowledge, as has already been done for centuries by academic specialists of Japan. The most problematic limit of any kind of Orientalism is that in order to make sense of identity and alterity it relies on binary oppositions that induce distancing and ultimately dehumanising configuration of otherness.

Cross-cutting stereotypical common sense, mass media and academic discourse, 'Japan' and 'the Japanese' continue to be evoked as intrinsically different, alternatively in terms of excess or lack of Euro-American identity. Samurai, geisha, and urban youth cultures may be superiorised and admired respectively as symbols of authentic honour and martial arts, aestheticized femininity and eroticism, metrosexual and transmedial cool; or, they may be inferiorised and commiserated as symbols of *kamikaze* or *harakiri* fanaticism, passive submission to patriarchic male desire, or techno-virtual consumerism and infantilism. Within the imagined geography of past or neo-Orientalism, exoticism and racism are two sides of the same coin, ultimately precluding 'the Japanese' from anthropological citizenship as normal or universal humans. In other words, Occidentalism and the resulting idea of the 'West' as long as it builds upon a contrastive grammar of exclusivistic dualism, will intermingle with a kind of Orientalism that induces imagining, thinking, loving or hating the Japanese other as intrinsically alien to reason, individualism, freedom and progress.[4]

Regardless of individual or conscious intentions of the individual Euro-American authors and actors that are to a large extent pre-determined by being embedded in this matrix of intelligibility, the fundamental paradigms assigned to 'Western' identity make no sense within Orientalism if attributed also to the subaltern other. As long as this matrix remains unaffected by epistemological hybridity, the existence in Japan of universal or rational

4 Actually, according to the World Values Survey, Japan has been in the last two decades (1996-2015) always ranked as the first country in the world for 'secular-rational values' that are defined in contrast to 'traditional values' based on religion, traditional family values and authority (http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSContents.jsp?CMSID=Findings).

thought, individualism, democracy and so forth becomes not only insignificant or irritating to the hegemonic Euro-American gaze, even if they may be sometimes acknowledged as undeniable exceptions which confirm the general rule that Japan is fundamentally different; what may be even more problematic is that every kind of basic isomorphism with the 'West' becomes almost invisible when thinking, imagining, loving or hating the Japanese other. For the epistemological unconscious of Euro-American Orientalism in modern age, the marked construction of a pure, authentic and innate alterity in order to evoke a kind of *Homo Japonicus*, or of any *Homo Orientalis*, has been a reassuring gurantee to preserve the unmarked hegemony of a supposed *Homo Occidentalis*.

The crucial point to be made is that the employment of this identification and othering process in order to become hegemonic implies more than a one-sided exercise of exoticising fantasies or a unilateral imposition on the passive, mute and subaltern other sustained by military, political or economic power. The effectiveness of hegemony relies upon the hegemony's acceptance, interiorisation and active reproduction by the subaltern itself. This applies to the other-definition of the 'West' as the universal other (other-Occidentalism) as well as to self-definition as the more or less subaltern 'East' (self-Orientalism). In other words, Occidentalism becomes completely hegemonic only through the interaction with the non-Euro-American subaltern, and, mostly important, only when the latter accepts the imagined geography of the 'West' as a looking-glass self in order to make sense of themselves/herself/himself as well as others, thus mobilising a similar internal process of intersecting discourses, practices and emotions. The result is a mutually constitutive and intersubjective process, a sort of mirror game in which specular identity and alterity representations enforce one another, reproducing the 'West' as the ultimate and universal point of reference.

This is particularly evident in the case of modern and contemporary Japan. Since the 1980s, critical investigation on cultural nationalism in postwar Japan, specifically regarding the immensely popular *nihonjinron* (lit. 'theories on the Japanese') discourse, has pointed out the complicity between the most influential Euro-American specialists of Japan and Japanese culturalists, in jointly establishing the dominant idea of a homogeneous, particularistic and unique 'Japan' antithetical to a generalized and universal 'West' (Mouer, Sugimoto 1986; Dale 1988; Iwabuchi 1994; Befu 2001).

> what gives the majority of Japanese the characteristic image of Japanese culture, is still its distinction from the so-called West. […] the loss of the distinction between the West and Japan would result in the loss of Japanese identity in general (Sakai 2002, pp. 564-565).

However, this kind of cultural self-orientalism or cultural self-colonisation, despite Japan never having been politically colonised, would not have been possible without its own strategic advantages. Sakai Naoki has illustrated how the modern *schema of co-figuration* between a universalistic 'West' contrasted to a particularistic 'Japan' has been very effective since the nineteenth century in evoking an ethno-linguistic and cultural entity known as 'Japan' (Sakai 1997). More specifically, Iwabuchi Kōichi has convincingly suggested that national identity in modern Japan has been shaped through a triadic scheme, by strategically positioning itself between two essentialized poles of the 'West' and the 'East' (Iwabuchi 1994, 2002). The resulting nationalistic discourses configured by this double othering process, other-Occidentalism of Europe/USA and other-Orientalism of Asia, have offered strategical or positional advantages. They have been proven to be extremely functional both internally, in order to mobilise social cohesion and consent, as well as externally in occidentalist discourses to affirm cultural exclusivity of Japan in regards to the Euro-American 'West', and in orientalist discourses to advocate colonial superiority over the Asian 'East'.

Nevertheless, Occidentalism, like any hegemony, is neither a static structure nor a closed system of abstract and self-referential binary oppositions; rather, it is embedded in a historical process whereby negotiation and disjunctions are always at stake. Following changes in geopolitical, economical and material asymmetries, its effectiveness relies upon how the imitation, interiorisation, negotiation and reproduction of its intersecting discourses, practices and emotions contribute to the corroboration of the sameness of discursive identity and alterity, or, on the contrary, are able to introduce some ambiguity, slippages or even subversive disruptions. Even if rarely acknowledged, hegemony is an intrinsically polyphonic process. Thus, the ambivalent status of Japan, as a modern nation-state both orientalised by the hegemonic Euro-American side and, at the same time, orientalising the subaltern Asian side (Iwabuchi 1994; Sakai 1997), reveals how Occidentalism is not only a mutually constituted process shaped by a generic centre/periphery structure; it is instead an asymmetrical network of relations articulated through multiple, nuanced and fluid positions of dominance and subalternity.

This preliminary discussion of the relational and intersectional processuality of hegemony has focused on the broader geocultural frame of modern Occidentalism. However, it is the additional focus on positionality in the discussion that follows, which will provide a more specific perspective suited to the case of contemporary Japan, in general, and to its emergent popular cultures, in particular. Positionality will be considered as a time and space contingent as well as an ambivalent site where discourses, practices, actors and institutions are both differentially configured by Occidentalism as well as potentially open to change. It is in this regard that Japanese popular cultures deserve particular attention not only as a strategic site for the negotiation and reproduction of any hegemony, but also because they have become, in the last three decades, the driving force for stimulating global interest in Japan among younger generations.

Particularly compelling is that while Japanese cultural expressions have been mainly selected and appreciated in the past by Euro-American audiences for their potential to evoke non-'western' 'Japaneseness' framed by the imagined geography of Orientalism, the international boom of Japanese popular cultures instead has been established to a large extent without relying on this hegemonic othering process. Defying conventional boundaries of high/low literature, Yoshimoto Banana and Murakami Haruki have become the most read Japanese writers worldwide, because most of the international audience have been attracted not necessarily by their 'oriental', Japanese and particularistic otherness, but primarily by their fresh, intimate or visionary narratives that have been able to stimulate deep connections with shared or isomorphic conditions of living in a late capitalist, postmodern and affluent society. This applies even to a much larger extent to the global success of the Japanese cultural industry. Videogames, manga, anime, character goods, etc. have become one of the main ingredients of inculturation for last Euro-American generations since their early childhood, so much that they are not even acknowledged anymore as made in Japan.

On the one hand, Japanese popular cultures are primarily appreciated for their extraordinary capacity to entertain, but also for stimulating self-discovery, new social relations and transmedial literacy. On the other, this does not mean that they are immune to being orientalised in a second phase, in particular when it comes to promoting them as cultural capital grounded on essentialised 'Japaneseness'. However, it is the constitutive hybrid nature of Japanese popular cultures, both as implemented Euro-American media technology in Japan, as well as transmedial aesthetic cross-cutting high/low art dichotomies, that may offer a potential still to be explored for re-imagining Japan exonarated from the hegemonic intermingling of Occidentalism, Orientalism and self-Orientalism.

4 The Emergence of *Mangaesque* Pop Nationalism

Following the editorial success of revisionist manga series such as *Sensōron* (On War) by Kobayashi Yoshinori, popular cultures have become the object of widespread attention in Japanese public opinion that overlaps with heated debates on history, nationalism and new generations (Sakamoto 2008). In contrast to ideological, political or essentialised interpretations of the nation's past and present, some commentators have pinpointed to the radical change among new generations regarding the way they experience themselves in relation to the nation as an 'imagined political community'. In fact, this post-ideological or post-modern experience has become increasingly detached from or indifferent to the previous dialectics of true vs. false or good vs. evil, which continues to inform the evaluational horizon of revisionist, progressivist or institutional discourses (Honda 2007).

At the same time, the globalised diffusion of Japanese popular cultures has inspired politics and bureaucrats since the Koizumi government in 2003 to start the 'Cool Japan' campaign: an ambitious programme of soft power employing manga, anime, videogames, and youth subcultures in order to improve Japan's image in the world, to promote cultural industry as a solution to economic stagnation, and to encourage a renewed sense of pride in the Japanese national culture (Daliot-Bul 2009). In other words, over the past decade, Japanese popular cultures have become an increasingly strategical and contested site for the negotiation and re-articulation of Japaneseness or 'Japanese national culture', ranging from governmental and corporate brand nationalism to emergent subcultural data-consumption and collaborative creativity (Iwabuchi 2008; Azuma 2009; Condry 2013): a fluid intersection between new forms of hegemony, both from above and below, disseminated and reconfigured through the circuits of its *mangaesque* media mix (Steinberg 2012).

Mangaesque aesthetics does not only attest to the historical primacy of manga media in influencing other media texts, like anime, videogames, character design, etc. Some of the defining aspects of manga are relevant in favouring its increasing media convergence or cross-over with other media texts and practices such as networking potential through manga-specific mediality, postcritical ascertainment, hobbification, visual artificiality/virtualisation, and hybrid identities (Berndt 2012).

In this scenario, increasing academic attention has been paid to the emergent role of urban subcultures, not only as a source of post-modern acculturation and literacy within Japan, but also as nurturing a new generation of *pro-sumers* (producers and consumers) who are establishing themselves as actors of a wider paradigm shift within an increasingly globalised and convergent mediascape

> from medium-specific content toward content that flows across multiple media channels, toward the increased interdependence of communications systems, toward multiple ways of accessing media content, and toward ever more complex relations between top-down corporate media and bottom-up participatory culture (Jenkins 2006, p. 243).

5 *Moe* Nation Anthropomorphism

So, how is the relational process between Westernness and Japaneseness re-articulated in the emergent spheres of *mangaesque* pop nationalism? What kind of different levels of discourse, practice or emotion may be mobilised and may intersect within bottom-up participatory culture in the reproduction of Occidentalism in contemporary Japan? How are positional contingencies affected by Occidentalism? Or are they able to introduce some kind of slippage or disruption?

One of the most popular forms underlying the renewed actuality of the 'national' or 'nationness' in the Japanese media mix is *moe* nation anthropormorphism: the *mangaesque* personification of entire nations as cute sexualised girl or boy characters, which is a major expression of emergent subcultures and their defining hobbies. *Moe* is a popularised slang term indicating a strong interest, feeling or passion for particular types of young, cute, and sexy characters. It has been described as a conflation of child-like innocence and adult desire, an ambivalent and polymorphous stimulation of pure, protecting and nurturing feelings for cute and helpless characters as well as stimulation of desire for eroticised young fictional characters (Galbraith 2009). While emerging originally from male-oriented *otaku* subcultures, hardcore fans of manga, anime, videogames, and figurines, it has also been widely appropriated by female-oriented subcultures, such as *fujoshi* (lit. 'rotten women'): a self-deprecatory term used among teenagers and young women who are readers or writers of the Boys' Love genre, centered on male homosexual intimacy and romance, and especially of the *yaoi* (homoerotic romantic or sexual genre of fiction) sub-genre (Galbraith 2011). *Yaoi* refers to more sexually explicit and ironic works, also featuring male homosexual related fantasies but differing from the more commercialised Boys' Love (hereafter BL) stories in that they are mostly plotless adaptations and amateur parodies of original works taken from mainstream manga and anime.

Moe inspired fans to use online discussions forums, such as 2channel, *dōjinshi* (the huge world of amateur manga), and *cosplay* (the costume roleplays) to develop an even purer expression of cuteness known as *moe* anthropomorphism: the representation of inanimate objects or concepts as cute girls or boys. Operating systems (*Os-tan*), voice-generating softwares (*Hatsune Miku*), war machines (*mechamusume*), household appliances, confectionery, philosophy, history, the Constitution, and everything imaginable, from tangible things to abstract theories, has been rearticulated as *moe* and transfigured as beautiful cute girls/boys. *Moe* anthropormophism has also been widely extended to nations, resulting in commercialised popular works dedicated to a single nation, like *Nihon-chan* or *Aghanis-tan*. In other words, the whole world has been exposed to *moefication* as can be seen in the infinite series of *mangaesque* dictionaries teaching readers about the world and its nations personified by cute eroticised girls or boys (Thompson 2009).

6 The Boom of *Axis Powers Hetalia*

By far and away the most popular transmedial platform for *moe* nation anthropomorphism, both in Japan and internationally, is the one originated by the web manga *Axis Powers Hetalia* (*2006).[5] *Axis Powers Hetalia* (hereafter APH) is a gag comic and animation series depicting historical and military relations between more than 40 nations, anthropomorphised as cute looking and incompetent boys and kids.[6] These male characters personify broadstroke national, ethnic and linguistic stereotypes, and international relations are transfigured as intimate and childish quarrels mainly between the trio of the historic Axis Powers (Italy, Germany, and Japan) and between the characters of the Allied Forces (USA, UK, France, Russia, and China). There is no general and linear narrative providing a unifying frame to the mostly four-panel manga format and five-minute anime episodes. In other words, it is basically a plotless, loosely connected series about national characters, centred on short and silly gags set against the background of World War I and II as well as including episodes from ancient and medieval history and reaching to present-day geopolitics.

APH started as a web manga drawn by an amateur manga artist, Himaruya Hidekaz (*1985), and posted on his personal website *Kitayume* in 2006 (`http://www.geocities.jp/himaruya/hetaria/index.html`), while he was a student at a New York art school. In the following months the online diffusion gradually acquired a sort of cult status among female netsurfers, prompting Japanese publisher Gentōsha Comics to release two printed volumes of APH's vignettes in 2008. After selling a million copies by late 2009, they were followed by the release of a third volume in 2010, a fourth one in 2011, a fifth one in 2012, and a sixth one in 2013. At present the estimated total sales amount to about 2 million copies. Meanwhile, in 2009, Studio Deen in Tokyo began working on an adaptation of the first series of short animation episodes (*Hetalia Axis Powers*) directed by Bob Shirohata, and released online by Animate.tv, which is now in its sixth season; this was followed by a feature-length animated film in 2010 (*Paint it, White!*). As usual for successful Japanese manga or anime, everything imaginable has been merchandised, in a virtually infinite media mix: CD character songs, drama CDs, videogames, cute figurines, vending machines with APH drinks, photo

5 Fieldwork on *Axis Power Hetalia-inspired fandom* was conducted in Japan from May to October 2010, and in Italy from October 2010 to January 2011. For a complete study on *Axis Powers Hetalia*, please refer to Miyake 2013.

6 The word 'Hetalia' in the title is a contraction of the Japanese slang term '*hetare*', meaning 'incompetent, useless, pathetic' and of the term 'Italia', which stands for Italy. Some of the minor characters are female personifications (Belarus, Belgium, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Seychelles, Taiwan, Ukraine). For a detailed description in English of all characters throughout the different media platforms (`http://hetalia.wikia.com/wiki/List_of_Axis_Powers_Hetalia_characters`).

sticker booths (*purikura*), and, of course, hundreds of stationary gadgets.

If we consider that APH was originally the work of an amateur without any evident aesthetic or graphic sophistication, and without any narrative consistency, then its extraordinary popularity among *dōjinshi* (fanzines, amateur manga, novels, poems, illustrations, etc.) is even more remarkable than its commercial success. Thousands of different amateur-produced titles, ranging from manga to light novels have been exhibited for sale in the many manga and *cosplay* conventions dedicated to the APH world. StadioYou has organised hundreds of *Hetalia Only Events* in major Japanese cities, from the all-inclusive *World Series* to more segmented *Kyara Only Events* limited to specific nation characters and couple combinations. Besides *Komiketto* in Tokyo, the biggest amateur manga/anime event in the world, attendance of events observed during June-October 2010 ranged from 150 author/fan circles (ca 1,500 visitors) to 450 circles (ca 10,000 visitors). Excluding some of the organisers, most of these events had a 100% female attendance. At the summer 2010 *Komiketto 78*, the 1,586 attending APH circles ranked second in number only behind the more male-oriented shooting game *Tōhō Project* circles.[7] Starting from 2009 and lasting until late 2011, APH became by far the most frequently adapted work among female-oriented *dōjinshi* in Japan.[8]

The infinite chain of derivative works, parodies, and spin-offs of the original is not limited to Japanese versions but has since spread to almost every language used on the internet. Through the web, and thanks to intensive scanlation and fansubbing, APH has had a dramatic impact around the whole world, especially among female fans of Japanese comics and animations, even before being officially translated into English or other main languages.[9] Since 2009, an Axis Powers Hetalia Day is celebrated on 24 October by the international fandom – especially by English-speaking fans in the USA, United Kingdom and Canada – who assemble, *cosplay* APH

7 *Komiketto 78* (Summer 2010): 1. *Tōhō Project* (2,416 fan/author circles); 2. *Hetalia* (1,586); 3. *Reborn* (822); 4. *Sengoku Basara* (575); 5. *Gin Tama* (532). See *Nyūsu 2 channeru*, http://news020.blog13.fc2.com/blog-entry-788.html. Online survey on visitors of the *Komiketto 78* have confirmed APH inspired works as the most desired items for purchase among female *otaku*: 1. *Hetalia*; 2. *Reborn*; 3. *Durarara!!*; 10. *Tōhō Project*. See *Otalab*, http://otalab.net/news/detail.php?news_id=1024.

8 At the *Komiketto 80* (Summer 2011), APH circles diminished, but still ranked second: 1. *Tōhō Project* (2,808 circles); 2. *Hetalia* (1,302); 3. *Sengoku Basara* (880); 4. *Reborn* (572); 5. *Vocaloid* (558). See *Moe ota nyūsu sokuhō*, http://otanews.livedoor.biz/archives/51807832.html. YahooAuctionsJapan online lists 8,443 Japanese APH *dōjinshi* related titles and 2,565 *cosplay* related items. See *Yahuoku*, http://auctions.search.yahoo.co.jp/search?p=%A5%D8%A5%BF%A5%EA%A5%A2&auccat=0&tab_ex=commerce&ei=euc-jp.

9 In Italy, which according to Pellitteri is the Euro-American nation with the highest number of Japanese animation series broadcast on television since 1978 (Pellitteri 2010, p. 556), APH has become, since 2009, the most popular work among the hardcore female fandom of *cosplay* and fanfiction, even before being translated officially into Italian.

characters, exhibit huge national flags, and discuss coupling combinations. In 2010, APH Day was celebrated in 35 countries, with 160 registered meetups (*Hetalia Day*, `http://hetalia-day.com/`). Finally, in that same year, the first two manga volumes were published in English by Tokyopo for the North American market, topping both *The New York Times* manga best seller list, and entering a more commercialised stage of their global diffusion.

7 Eurocentric Cartography and Gendered Whiteness

The imagined geography displayed in the APH world maps included in the original printed manga volumes are a striking example of Eurocentric cartography (Himaruya 2008-2013, vol. 3, pp. 10-11). Apart from Japan, almost all the main characters in the original manga and anime versions are cute and attractive white male Caucasians: Axis Powers Italy and Germany, together with Allied forces USA, England, France, Russia, and the 'Five Nordic Nations' (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Denmark). Most of the episodes are inspired by events that occurred between World War I and II, and centre on intimate quarrels between European characters, the American character and Japan. But if we consider Japan's international relations in this period, we find that most of the real historical and military events actually involved very dramatic and tragic engagements between Imperial Japan and its Asian neighbours. However, the series only includes a few Asian characters, of which the most important one is China, in some isolated episodes, followed by the character of Korea in the web manga; while Taiwan, Hong Kong, Thailand, and Vietnam appear mainly as sketch characters in Himaruya's webpage and blog.

In addition to the textual and visual level, the modern cultural history of national identity regarding 'Japan' vs. the 'West' is confirmed by readers' preference for white Caucasian characters. A poll carried out by APH publisher Gentōsha investigating readers' most loved characters resembles a kind of *gaijin akogare* (fascination for western foreigners) ranking. In fact the 19 most popular characters after top-ranking Japan are England, Germany, Russia, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, Greece, USA, Sweden, with China as the only character from the 'Rest' of the world voted in 17th place (`http://www.gentosha-comics.net/hetalia/enquete/index_02.html`).

This kind of *mangaesque* attraction for the 'white male' is also confirmed by the *dōjinshi* amateur scene. Maps of APH conventions show how the distribution of tables and fan circles are completely framed according to the BL or *yaoi* code of male-to-male pairings: *seme* (active, stronger, 'penetrating' character) paired to a *uke* (passive, weaker, 'receiving' character). The most popular is the America (*seme*)/England (*uke*) pairing, followed by the England (*seme*)/Japan (*uke*) pairing, the Prussia (*uke*) corner, the France (*seme*)/England (*uke*) pairing and the Scandinavian characters corner.[10] Japan is not only the most popular character among general readers of the original, but also very popular as a completely feminised or infantilised male *uke* character on the *dōjinshi* scene. Exhibition layouts of APH conventions centred exclusively on Japan as a *uke* character show that the most popular *seme* partners are all white Caucasians: firstly England, followed by the USA, France, Prussia, Italy, and Russia.[11]

As regards the relational processuality of Occidentalism, I suggest that the interiorisation of a Eurocentric cartography plays a prominent role in the popularity of APH not only in Japan, but also worldwide, especially in Euro-American contexts. Eurocentrism and whiteness contribute to the immediate familiarity and direct appropriation of the APH world and characters by Euro-American readers, without any need for complex mediation imposed by displacing difference or otherness. This familiarity is further enhanced by the specific stereotyping of characters according to modern cliches of the so-called national characters, adopted by the author Himaruya in response to mostly ethnic jokes diffused among his American friends, while he was studying in New York. For instance, Japan is shy, well mannered, loves the changes of seasons, and technological gadgets but is clumsy in communicating his feelings and thoughts. On the contrary, Italy is a light-hearted idler, and pizza-pasta-music loving coward. America is an energetic, self-confident, perpetually hamburger-eating character who loves to play hero, but is superstitious and afraid of supernatural beings.

8 Sexualised Parody

In addition to its wider Eurocentric cartography and fascination for whiteness, it is also important to pay attention to more positionally specific differences introduced by APH's re-contextualisation of Occidentalism, and to acknowledge other intersections related to more ambivalent spheres of identification and nuanced modes of appropriation. According to the aforementioned Gentōsha survey, 'nation' is the second most appreciated aspect among general readers (`http://www.gentosha-comics.net/hetalia/enquete/index.html`). Nations are anthropomorphised as *shōnen* (cute boys) characters, and, in the absence of a supporting narrative and graphic sophistication, are condensed as the exclusive focus of the short episodes. This means that, on the one hand, Eurocentrism, whiteness,

10 See catalogues of *Hetalia Only Events* (Sekai Kaigi Series) organised by StadioYou in Osaka (Index Osaka, 19 September 2010, p. 1) and Nagoya (Sangyō Rōdō Center, 12 September 2010, p. 8).

11 See catalogue of *Hetalia Nihon* Uke *Only Event: Sekai no Honda 2* organised by StadioYou in Tokyo (Ryūtsū Center, 5 September 2010, p. 1).

and geopolitical asymmetry are clarified and essentialised, considering the wide use of stereotypes related to nation, ethnicity, and language, and that characters, at least in the original, are only known by nation names ('Japan', 'Italy', 'Germany', etc.).[12] Entire nations are personified through a unified human body, personality and name, contributing to the erasure of internal diversities and historical complexities. For instance, Occidentalism is enhanced by personifying the USA, Russia or Germany as strong, blond-haired, active characters, while self-Orientalism is reaffirmed by Japan as a shy, passive, insecure and feminised boy or kid.

But, on the other hand, it is the very anthropomorphic and caricatural incarnation of modern nationness, as seen in the insistence upon their childish and intimate male-to-male relations, that introduces a fundamental ironic slippage to conventional images of world history, international relations, and national politics. This contributes to very exhilarating effects, and stimulates a polymorphous range of symbolic associations and emotions, both of which have been crucial in mobilising such widespread readings of the original manga and so many parodies among amateur *pro-sumers*.

As far as the pleasure of parodying APH is concerned, it is important to stress that the original is not a mere personification of Euro-American nations or of Japan, but already a parody of them: a pastiche, which may oscillate between a homage to Eurocentric history and fascination for whiteness, and a mocking caricature of their national stereotypes and their infantile behaviour. In this regard, Occidentalism functions in the original as a kind of discursive hypotext. The hegemonic *grand narrative*, so familiar in both Euro-American and Japanese contexts, is transfigured by resorting to an effective bricolage of highly popular icons, borrowed strategically by both male-oriented *otaku* and female-oriented *fujoshi* subcultures.[13]

BL and *yaoi* fantasies, on the other hand, are dominant in *dōjinshi* works, displaying in many cases a male homoerotic and very sexually explicit, often pornographic version of Occidentalism. On the one hand, anthropomorphised Eurocentrism and geopolitical hierarchy may be further enhanced due to the *yaoi* code of *seme* and *uke*, focussing on a far more restricted relation and narrative than in the original. This makes the hierarchic and dualistic dialectic of identity and alterity even more evident. As Nagaike Kazumi has highlighted in her study on the racialised textuality of BL magazines, this hierarchic dialectic mostly presents the 'masculine' superiorisa-

12 In contrast to the original manga and anime series, personal names suggested by Himaruya himself are widely used in *dōjinshi* adaptations (Italy = Feliciano Vargas; Germany = Ludwig; Japan = Kiku Honda; USA = Alfred F. Jones, etc.).

13 The sexualised and male homoerotic overtones of Himaruya's APH characters remain mostly implicit, allowing for appreciation by a wider readership, who are not interested or even detest *yaoi* inspired homoerotic and sexually explicit representations.

tion of the Euro-American other as *seme*, and the 'feminine' inferiorisation of the Japanese self as *uke*, as well as the exotic orientalisation or erasure of the 'Rest' of the world (Nagaike 2009).

On the other hand, unlike commercial BL works, these *dōjinshi* are amateur works, parodies of the original APH. So if Himaruya's work is already itself a parody of the hegemonic hypotext of Occidentalism, then these *dōjinshi* are a parody of a parody. Due to the different positionality of the mostly female *dōijinshi* authors living in Japan, the discursive distance concerning Occidentalism as well as Euro-American material referentiality is therefore further enhanced and diluted. When Himaruya composed APH, he was living in New York, and he was mostly inspired by Euro-American friends and students in modelling his manga characters. *Dōjinshi* authors, on the other hand, live in Japan, and therefore re-contextualisation is shaped both by different gendered positions as well as by referentiality to different people, and to different material, social, and institutional conditions. Interviews show that most *dōjinshi* readers and authors are actually not very fond of Euro-American history and nations, whiteness, the original work and its author, or male homosexuality.[14] What matters is mostly their very specific and concrete need as teenagers or young women in relation to the gendered and sexualised norms informing their external relation with other teenagers, men and adults in contemporary Japan, as well as their internal relations with the *dōjinshi* or wider APH fandom.

9 Conclusion: (Un)doing Occidentalism

> The West becomes not so much a source of critical comparative perspective (which can be evaluated for its 'accuracy', for example) as an imaginative simulacrum infinitely available for the production of discourses that motivate and explain resistance or accommodation (Kelsky 2001, p. 28).

Karen Kelsky's account of women's internationalist narratives and practices in late 1990s Japan, also perfectly apply to the APH world. But if the 'West' as a simulacrum is everywhere, like the air we are breathing, does it make sense to criticise it? Or should we instead focus more on its strategical uses in order to highlight «resistance or accomodation» in specific contexts, groups, and single life-courses?

14 Many amateur authors and cosplayers are not necessarily interested in world history or European nations *per se*, but on how to use that setting or context in an effective way for their personal adaptation. Much time may be invested in studying the context in its most minute detail, and the 'serious' knowledge thus acquired may be employed in regards to 'non-fans' to legitimate an apparently 'embarrassing' hobby (Miyake 2013).

On the one hand, this study suggests that the APH world, in spite of its cosmopolitan intentions (nations falling in love and having sex with each other) and liberating pleasures, does not necessarily erase the founding hypotext or pretext rooted in the imagined geography of the 'West', making it magically ineffective. The cumulative intersectionality of Occidentalism is instead further enhanced through nation anthropomorphism and sexualised parody. This allows a biopolitical extension, mobilising more emotional, spontaneous, and physical dimensions. Parody, *moe* inspiring affect, and asymmetrical relationships framed by the *seme/uke* code of BL and *yaoi* narrative, contribute to inducing euphoric and humorous responses, ultimately re-enforcing Occidentalism through highly emotional and polymorphous projections in terms of gender and sexuality. This contributes to a process of further naturalisation of the 'West'. Finally, transnational popularity re-activates the relational reproduction of Occidentalism, and is ultimately evidence of its globalised effectiveness as a version of a 'Cool Japan'.

On the other hand, in contrast to an overreading of a mostly female-oriented subculture, it is the very parodic aspect of APH that confers upon its *mangaesque* media mix such an ambivalent status, a kind of paradoxical and double-bind relation as regards the hegemonic hypotext of Occidentalism in terms of repetitive confirmation or critical subversion; and this also applies to all subcultures in the world concerning their relations with the wider society.What is at stake in this critical reading of APH is not only the hegemonic reproduction from below of Occidentalism, but also of its intersecting paradigms. Academic investigation has Academic investigation in the last decades, has so far been able to mark most of the socio-cultural categories ('nation', 'class', 'race/ethnicity', 'gender', 'sexual orientation', 'youth', 'disability', etc.) involved in the construction of modern identity and alterity, making them visible and available to systematic or critical examination. However, the underlying assumptions, paradigms and categories cumulatively intersecting and configuring Occidentalism are still, to a large extent, unmarked or have been addressed 'separately'. This study suggests that Occidentalism as a kind of blind spot in the Humanities and Social Sciences contributes to the ongoing conflation of the idea of the 'West' with notions of the 'modern', 'postmodern', 'capitalism', 'globalization', 'cosmopolitization', etc. The lack of systematic and critical examination into Occidentalism as a hegemonic matrix of intelligibility enhances the naturalising and transfiguring effect of the 'West' into an unmarked existence that continues to define the universal standard or norm, against which to measure everything else.

Are the intersecting notions of the 'West', 'Race', 'Nation', or 'Love', as established in the modern age, and arguably reproduced as postmodern simulacra, really like the air we inevitably have to breathe? Is it possible to imagine texts and images, or to practice alternative ways of geopolitical, societal, and personal interactions without relying on this hegemonic network of collective identification and othering?

> As the postwar finally 'ends', the task in Japan and elsewhere is therefore to reconceive the modern, which is less an idea than an episteme, less a concept than a condition [...]. We all seem to suffer from a kind of conceptual insufficiency, in that we are facing the twenty-first century armed with the notions of the nineteenth. We are still moderns, which explain our obsession with 'ends' and the caesura of 1989, but ours is a 'nontopia': we are without a vision of the future. The millennial challenge therefore is less a question of ends or of overcoming the modern than to avoid being overcome *by* the modern and drifting visionless into the next millennium. And this problem is not Japan's alone, but all of ours (Gluck 2003, p. 312).

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Contemporary Japan
Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition

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A New Frontier in Art
From Calligraphy to Performance

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Abstract Over the last few years writing and calligraphic forms have seen a huge revival both in Japan and in East Asia developing as a new form of art. Works and installations using calligraphy, writing or typographic fonts and exploiting the richness of Asian languages have increased to the point where there's no exhibition or Biennal where art writing is missing. Following the classical pictorial models and formats, where calligraphy and painted images are considered as a unique form of expression, similarly, today calligraphic forms are used, mixed and overlapping with images both in contemporary graphic design and in photographic works. However, we can see also an increase in research through performative acts which recall the instinctive and free gesture of the *zenga* masters, at the same time adding at the same time to that approach the qualities of new media, technologies and internationalized art trends. The result is a completely new form of art expression originating from a continuous exchange between worldly active and complementary creative movements.

Summary 1. The Great Influence of Zen Philosophy and Calligraphic Art on American and European Contemporary Artists. – 2. Image and Text Relationship in Classical Japanese Painting. – 2.1. Synchronic Relationship. – 2.2. Diachronic Relationship. – 3. Image and Text Relationship in Contemporary Japanese Visual Arts. – 3.1. Synchronic Relationship. – 3.2. Diachronic Relationship. – 4. Japanese New Forms of Calligraphy Influenced by Euro-American Performative Art: the Case of the 'Shodō Girls'.

1 The Great Influence of Zen Philosophy and Calligraphic Art on American and European Contemporary Artists

Over the last few years we have seen growing interest all over the world from scholars, artists and creative people in the 'written word', understood as a sign, but also significance, and as writing in its most aesthetic form, i.e. calligraphy, right up to the boundaries of the more contemporary and experimental 'word art'. A huge revival of the calligraphic tradition has recently been recorded in Japan, too: many exhibitions and publications have been promoted by the main Japanese museums and calligraphic associations and their journals, which register thousands of members, both professional and amateur,[1] as well as visitors in the case of exhibitions. In these contexts, calligraphy is promoted in the most traditional way, related to Chinese roots and to the classic tradition, although with some new experiments in materials and in the use of colours instead of pure black ink.

However, outside this official world, a far wider phenomenon, though less conscious, is moving towards the acceptance and use of calligraphy in infinite forms and materials, which are no longer merely paper, brush and ink, but involve new mechanical, digital and optical technologies leading to three-dimensional and virtual products and artistic creations.[2]

Traditionally, we associate calligraphy with Oriental, Chinese and Japanese cultures and immediately imagine a sheet of paper on which strokes of black ink are traced with a brush, using a natural and instinctive movement of the calligrapher's hand and body. Thus we see calligraphy not only as a sign, but as a gesture as well. In this sense the most attractive calligraphic work was the eighteenth century *zenga* masters' ink painting on scrolls, which was produced inside the Buddhist monasteries not as an art product, but as a spiritual exercise linked to the path of meditation, together with disciplines such as the tea ceremony (*cha no yu*), the art of flower arrangement (*chabana*), the art of dry rock gardens (*karesansui*), the martial arts (*budō*). Calligraphy was the aesthetic means for transporting individual and conceptually powerful characters into reality by means of the briefest of phrases, each one line long (*ichigyōsho*), in a process of self knowledge, or by using pictorial elements linked to them – a form of teaching that could not be expressed in words or according to common logic but was only attainable by the disciple intuitively through meditation.

In this sense it is important to mention the terminology used to identify writing. Interestingly, while in the Euro-American countries the term calligraphy stems from the concept of 'beautiful writing' (from the Greek: *kalòs*=beautiful; *graphia*=writing), in which *graphia* is also the common denominator in photography (from the Greek: *phos*=light; *graphia*=writing), and graphic thus emphasizing the aspect of sign in the visual arts, in Japan the term for calligraphy is *shodō*, which means 'the Way of calligraphy', that is commonly mistranslated as the 'art of calligraphy'. In the word 書道 *shodō*, calligraphy is considered as a discipline in the same vein as 茶道 *sadō* (the Way of tea), 武道 *budō* (the Way of samurai), 香道 *kōdō* (the Way of incense), all related to the culture of Zen Buddhism, and it has nothing

1 Some main publications: Shimatani 2013a, 2013b; plus the two exhibitions «SHO1» and «SHO2» promoted by the Mainichi Shodō Association at the Musée des arts asiatiques Guimet in 2012 and 2013.

2 Two main artists have developed and affirmed this research in word art internationally: the Chinese Xu Bing through installations, and the Japanese Shin'ichi Maruyama through photography and video. See: Elliott, Tomii 2011; Maruyama 2009.

in common with the Japanese term used for photography 写真 (*shashin*)[3] or for graphic design, which was introduced in the Fifties and where the English term is still used today.[4]

The example of calligraphy connected with the Zen Buddhist teaching is of basic importance, especially seen in terms of the later developments of the art in relation to the Euro-American influences. In fact the latter developments have led to deviations not connected to the original schools and teachings, giving rise to completely new works of art both for the America and Europe and for Japan, inspired by fullness, freedom and the abstract nature of the calligraphic sign, the balance between solids and voids and the irregularity of forms. They are also new in terms of the supports used – paper rather than fabric, pigments, black ink rather than colour – as well as the formats – length of the horizontal scroll or concertina-type folding rather than the simple quadrangular shape, right up to the musical transposition of the spatial void (*kūkan* 空間) into silence (*ma* 間). There were many thinkers and artists who underwent a process of inner transformation and consequently transformation of their art by entering into contact first with Zen philosophy and then with art from the Nineteen Fifties onwards. This came about first and foremost thanks to the lectures that Professor and Master Daisetsu Teitarō Suzuki (1870-1966) held in many American universities and to his early translations of the Buddhist texts into English.[5] James Lee Byars (1932-1997),[6] Mark Tobey (1890-1976),[7] Yves Klein (1928-1962),[8] Henry Michaux (1899-1984),[9] John Cage (1912-1992),[10] to name but a few, opened the way to a new concept of hybrid calligraphy that combined East Asian as well as Euro-American art peculiarities.

This phenomenon is by no means at an end and is repeated, in the other opposite direction and naturally on a different basis today in Japan or by Japanese artists, involving in particular female, student, calligraphy clubs

3 写真 literally ‘copy’ and ‘true’, the term has been adopted to indicate photography in the 1860’s. See: Ozawa Takeshi 1997, pp. 24-26

4 It was Yūsaku Kamekura (1915-1997), considered the ‘boss’ of Japanese contemporary graphic design, to substitute the Japanese term 図案 (*zuan*) with the English one グラフィック・デザイン *gurafikku dezain* (graphic design) on the occasion of the exhibition «Grafic ‘55» at the Takashimaya Department Store where, for the first time, printed posters were exhibited instead of sketches designed by hand.

5 For a general survey see: Suzuki 1969.

6 Power 1994, p. 280.

7 Pearlman 2012, p. 38

8 McEvilley 2010, p. 28

9 Parish 2007, pp. 159-161; Michaux 2006.

10 Cage 1961, p. 303.

but also artists like Shin'ichi Maruyama who captures calligraphic gestures traced in the air with giant pens using high-resolution photographic technology and without leaving any trace on paper, apart from the photographic snapshot of the ink expanding in the air. In Maruyama's case, too, Zen inspiration is explicitly mentioned: he refers to the beauty of *wabi-sabi* aesthetic, the unrepeatable nature of the gesture, the inconsistency of the black liquid that finds its way on paper as in the void, to the importance given to the void (*ma* 間).[11]

2 Image and Text Relationship in Classical Japanese Painting

Having established this, it is clear that discussing calligraphy in Japan means discussing writing and image without distinction. Japanese culture is considered an unrivalled culture of packaging, where form and image cannot be separated and consequently the relationship between art and design and between visual arts and writing is also an intimate one. It is a relationship that finds its origin in literary and pictorial classics which we describe here along the lines of two main qualities.

2.1 Synchronic Relationship

A 'synchronic' image/text relationship – where the text can be a poetic verse or a calligraphic transcription of a classical text – is expressed in the format of long illustrated handscrolls (絵巻物 *emakimono*) or hanging painted scrolls (掛け物 *kakemono*). In this kind of work calligraphy and image are not independent, but a unique indivisible creation.

One example is the illustrated handscroll «Moon, Lespedeza and Ivy. Calligraphy of Poetries from *Kokinwakashū*»[12] by Hon'ami Kōetsu (1558-1637, calligraphy) and Tawaraya Sōtatsu (?-1643?, painting) which represents the kind of work in which the story or composition develops continuously along the entire surface of the handscroll with no interruption: verses of poetry written vertically from right to left are irregularly juxtaposed or alternated with paintings of natural elements such as the moon and grass. Thus, the synchronic relation between text and image manifests itself as an overlapping of the calligraphic text with the painted image used as decoration, creating a fusion and a balance between the two elements through the rhythm

11 See the artist official website: http://www.Shinichimaruyama.com/statement.

12 『月に萩・蔦下絵古今集和歌巻』 *Tsuki ni hagi, tsuta shita-e «Kokinwakashū» maki* (Moon, Lespedeza and Ivy: Calligraphy of Poetries from the *Kokinwakashū*), Hon'ami Kōetsu and Tawaraya Sōtatsu. Early seventeenth century, 34,3 × 928,6 cm. Ink, silver and gold on silk. Idemitsu Museum of Arts. See: Calza, Menegazzo 2009, pp. 185, 359.

of signs and voids and the variation in form and thickness of calligraphic characters which recall the beauty and movement of a sheet of music.

A different example of this relationship between text/image is the hanging scroll «Yatsuhashi»[13] by Ogata Kenzan (1633-1743), which refers to one of those 'famous locations' (名所 *meisho*) celebrated in the visual arts and alluding to literary and poetic references, in this case the Eightfold bridge described in *The Tales of Ise* (伊勢物語 *Ise monogatari*) of the ninth-tenth century (McCullough 1968, pp. 74-75). In works such as this painting, synchrony between text and image takes the form of as a coupling between the painted subject and the calligraphic text, which complete each other, here with gentle calligraphy running over the bridge like water in a stream. The best example of this characteristic, however, is 俳画 *haiga*, a form of painting composed by *haiku* poetry (俳句) and painting (画 *ga*), in which the image is evocative and not always explicitly linked to the subject of the poetry.

2.2 Diachronic Relationship

A 'diachronic' image/text relationship, as is to be seen in some illustrated handscrolls and in illustrated books (絵本 *e-hon*), alternates calligraphic parts with painted ones.

The «Genji monogatari illustrated handscroll»[14] is the most representative of this kind of work: today it is divided into single sheets for conservation purposes, so the paintings and calligraphic texts are separated, but originally each chapter was a sequence of calligraphic texts from the Heian period novel by the Court Lady Murasaki Shikibu, alternating with images which illustrate them.

3 Image and Text Relationship in Contemporary Japanese Visual Arts

Bearing this in mind, it is interesting to note that even in contemporary Japanese art production, where the fusion of multiple visual forms and media is the new frontier, the same absence of separation between word and image can be found as we saw in classical painting. This is a unity that has also developed far from the limit of the bi-dimensional pictorial

13 『八橋図』*Yatsuhashi-zu* (Eightfold Bridge), Ogata Kenzan. Eighteenth century, 28,4 × 36,6 cm. Ink, colour and gold on paper, hanging scroll. Important Cultural Property, Agency for Cultural Affairs. See: Calza, Menegazzo 2009, pp. 262, 366.

14 『源氏物語絵巻』 *Genji Monogatari emaki*, Murasaki Shikibu. Ink and colour on paper, twelfth century. Actually the handscroll's surviving painted and calligraphed sheets are collected in the Gotoh Museum in Tokyo and in the Tokugawa Art Museum in Nagoya. To find a recent study on the handscroll see: NHK Nagoya 2006.

surface to find new forms in three-dimensional composition or through new media. Photography in particular is one of the media which since the 1980's has improved and spread throughout the creative world, being used not only as a discipline in its own right but also applied to other fields such as graphic design, video art and games, and TV commercials. The boundaries between all the different media are continuously destroyed and reconstructed to bring new forms of expression into being. What remains, however, is the fusion, this time not between painting and calligraphy, but between photography/graphic design and an infinite range of typographic characters.[15]

Digital technology is the way through which pictorial tradition is transformed into a contemporary photo-graphic language. The variety and richness of characters and styles of the Japanese written language, formed by *kanji*, *kana* and the Roman alphabet, represents a great source to draw upon for playing and joking with new, different and mixed fonts in the same work; the brush stroke, too, is transformed in a widely varying range of thicknesses and rhythms applied to typographic characters which can similarly appear as slim and cursive, square and bold. In the same way, the creative freedom applied to the positioning and developing of calligraphic texts in classical pictorial works can also be found to persist in contemporary photo-graphic works.

3.1 Synchronic Relationship

A 'synchronic' image/text relationship can be seen in commercial graphic posters with a wide range of variations: For Shiseido's advertising campaign Masayoshi Nakajo uses overlapping, mixing, as well as an apparent disorder of *hiragana*, *kanji* and *rōmaji* in the typographic text to play with a photographic image that depicts the real subject, a line of models wearing dresses in different urban and country locations with text overlaid (see Tokyo Type Directors Club 2008, pp. 100-101, no. 114): a similar concept to the illustrated handscroll by Sōtatsu and Kōetsu. A different example is the work done by Tsuguya Inoue and Atarashi Ryōta to promote the book of

15 Some examples of Japanese graphic design works can be found in Menegazzo 2010. But, apart from Japan, also several art installations by Chinese artists confirm this interest: Pan Gongkai's «Snow melting in lotus» at the Venice Biennale 2011 mixed traditional ink monochrome Chinese characters with Latin alphabet ones to make a video of a tunnel with a calligraphic falling water; Tsang Kin-wah's «The Fifth Seal», shown at the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo in 2012, is a video installation using computer technologies to run texts in Chinese and Latin characters on the walls thus creating a space made by words. Moreover, the Japanese videogame 大神 *Ōkami*, produced by Clover Studio and distributed in 2006, presents the game using the form of a handscroll unrolling to the player and narrating the events accompanying the video-images with a text in *hiragana*.

photography by Eiichirō Sakata.[16] In this case, a digital photographic image is transformed into a fantastic construction in which text and image blend even more successfully to create a single sign and significance: a photo of a cluster of ladybugs in flight has been added to the title of the book, in a white row of Roman typographic characters, thus forming a track on the back of each insect which evokes their sound and movement in the sky. This example is much closer to Kenzan's painting of the Eightfold bridge and stream, where image and words intermingle to the point that the writing is used mostly as a sign to become itself an image.

3.2 Diachronic Relationship

The 'diachronic' image/text relationship is well represented by the multiple posters by the designer Kaoru Kasai and the calligrapher Kōji Kinouchi for the Oolong Tea Suntory campaign.[17] The posters are double the normal size and present a diachronic relationship between the written part and the photographic image. The horizontal format recalls the surface of an illustrated handscroll, alternating real photo-images of the product with typographic, brushlike calligraphic texts done by a professional calligrapher. The first campaign for black Oolong tea «Alarming to Neutral Fat» is clearly directed at a male consumer: a couple of male portraits are followed by bold and vigorous calligraphic characters, *kanji* and *hiragana*, starting from up-right to bottom-left and finishing with a small bottle of tea substituting the red seal of the calligrapher usually present in a traditional painting. The second campaign for Oolong tea entitled «My Big Sister Eats A Lot» is directed at a female audience: two portraits of girls, seemingly a younger and an elder sister, are followed by slim, elegant, cursive calligraphic characters typical of Heian period women's calligraphy. In this work technological means and traditional elements, like the choice of a long horizontal surface and the common feeling for calligraphy, are brought together to produce a strong and immediate commercial effect promoting the two types of tea to different categories of potential clients.[18]

Some masterpieces of graphic design show the most impressive result of this fusion of image and writing, as they use calligraphy and writing as

16 Sakata 2006. To see more works by Inoue Tsuguya: Nakazawa 2010.

17 See the Tokyo Type Directors Club website: `http://tdctokyo.org/eng/?award=07_kaoru-kasai-koji-kinouchi`.

18 To read Kaoru Kasai's words when he was presented with the TDC Award 2007 for this campaign, see the Tokyo Type Directors Club website: `http://tdctokyo.org/eng/?award=07_kaoru-kasai-koji-kinouchi`.

their main subject or, better, as an image in itself in an intimate relation of form and significance.

Ryūichi Yamashiro (1920-1997)'s poster «Forests, Woods, Trees» (森林木 *Mori*, *hayashi*, *ki*) designed in 1955 depicts a forest merely by using the pictographic character which in form and meaning refers to 'tree' (木 *ki*). Yamashiro uses the most simple concept but the most effective one for exploiting Chinese pictographic characters, repeating the same character: doubled it means 'wood' (林 *hayashi*) and with a third character added on the top it means 'forest' (森 *mori*). The repetition of the form of these signs together with their meanings creates an immediate perception of a typographic forest that still today remains a masterpiece of postwar design.[19]

Among his various studies on typographic fonts, in 1980 Ikkō Tanaka (1930-2002) created the poster «True» (真 *shin*) (Nara Prefectural Museum 2011, p. 32 no. 96) in which, as in a *zenga* painting, the calligraphic sign of the *kanji* 真 is traced by hand to fill the entire surface of the poster, thus becoming the subject of the work and used both as a sign and as a meaning. Tanaka thus transforms the practice traditionally linked to Zen painting into a contemporary graphic work through the use of colors and some more graphic and precise strokes (see the horizontal white line of 真) in contrast with the rest of the character which is hand painted.

In a different way, but similar to the construction of Yamashiro, is the poster realized by Norito Shinmura in 2005 entitled «Global Warming»,[20] which shows the great concern of this designer for the environment, an issue close to his heart due to his origins, since he was born in a family where all his brothers are fishermen. A typographic text is written in black characters at the top of the poster making the reader understand this is a very specific message on global warming and its effect on rising sea levels. The last rows of the text are about to be submerged by water, photographically rendered, and the other characters sink into the water, bending, rolling up and floating upside-down like light objects.

Going back to photography and to a more popular use of the medium, it is useful to remember that the fusion of writing and image has become a real social phenomenon since the 90's with the massive launch of *purikura* プリクラ (abbreviation of 'print club') machines, devices which produce mini stamp-like photos that are shot and collected especially by teenage girls. Young girls take portraits of themselves with their closest friends setting

19 Yamashiro 2003, p. 57. In 2001 at the North Carolina Museum of Art the Chinese artist and calligrapher Xu Bing created the installation «Du Shenjing» (Reading Landscape), with a similar concept to Yamashiro's poster, but going beyond the surface to develop three-dimensional characters in space, each corresponding to natural elements such as a tree 木, a stream 川, a mountain 山 and combining to form a landscape. Some views of the installation can be found in Tomii 2010, pp. 218-219.

20 To see this and other works: Shinmura, Niwano 2010, p. 9.

them against the fantastic, or even better, kitsch backgrounds offered by the machines, and writing over the image itself or around it to express their more intimate thoughts and words, then collected on the small pages of *purikura* albums (プリ長 *purichō*). The strength of this type of photography resides precisely in the interactivity of the medium, the wide possibility to modify, play with and retouch the image, adding messages, symbols and colours by hand on a very small surface.[21] However, it is writing that transforms the photographic image into a special and unique one, linking it to a precise moment or feeling to be shared with chosen people. It is maybe this very intimate and private aspect that gave this type of photography such great resonance amongst female teenagers. It developed into a sort of contemporary personal diary, just as happened in the Heian period (794-1185) with handwritten diaries (*nikki*) and later painted accounts on handscrolls (*emaki*) compiled by Court Ladies, but today expressed in the form of a photographic record of private events and life with the addition of handwritten intimate and frivolous thoughts (Menegazzo 2014, pp. 1035-1037).

To this phenomenon, basically a form of entertainment – a progressively more serious and professional photographic production, later dubbed 'girlie photography' (女の子の写真 *onna no ko no shashin*),[22] filled the bookstores with photographic series, in the form of books and albums where personal thoughts were added in typographic or calligraphic style in between or on top of the photo-images. The great photographer Araki Nobuyoshi himself used to express his more profound feelings, for example fear after having discovered he had cancer, in his photographic series entitled «Sora2 – Isaku» (空2 – 遺作 2TheSky, Araki 2009) in which photos of the sky are traced over by brush and colours using rough, thick calligraphic characters meaning 'death' or 'cancer'.

To conclude these brief comments on calligraphic text as used in graphic design and photography a recent trend should be mentioned, which has spread into the new visual media capturing the interest of amateurs at an international level. It is known as 俳写 (*haisha*),[23] a term which put together the meaning of *haiku* (俳句) and *shashin* (写真), creating an art form which brings together brief poems and photography following the classical Japanese pictorial model of 排画 (*haiga*) but using contemporary media. The English word for this trend is 'photopoetry', the Italian is 'fotopoesia', and around this virtual artistic production many websites, together with blogs and international contests and prizes have been created. Works of

21 For a sociological study on *purikura* see: Chalfen, Murui 2001, pp. 220-250.

22 They were presented for the first time in the exhibition and catalogue curated by Iizawa, Kōtarō 1999. See also: Dipietro 2001

23 Several webpages are devoted to *Haisha*. For the *Haisha* association: `http://www.50pa.com/haisya.html`.

haisha and photo-poetry use photographic images but also video-products instead of painting, to over-written poetic texts in Japanese, English or Italian. The interesting aspect of these amateur compositions is that in the passage from *haisha* to photopoetry we witness an extension of the concept of *haiga* in Euro-American culture, a sort of 'westernization' and actualization of this brief and peculiarly Japanese composition. *Haiku* is substituted by poetry, so both the length and characters of the verses are transformed into Euro-American languages and the corresponding alphabet, while the image has shifted from painting to digital photography. In this process it is obvious that the original meaning of *haiku*, strictly related to literary tradition and a special sensibility towards nature, is going to be lost, but at the same time it absorbs and expresses new meanings related to each Country's culture and tradition. Thus, as it happened in the Fifties with Zen teachings being absorbed by artists on the West Coast of the USA, what has emerged here is a completely new artistic production that is no longer Japanese, but is exotic enough and attractive to a foreign public because it conserves the peculiar trait of 'Japaneseness' which, thanks to globalized web media, can be accessed and enjoyed freely and by anybody, leading to the consequent spread of what we can consider a new *Japonisme* of the digital era.

4 New Japanese Forms of Calligraphy Influenced by Euro-American Performative Art: the Case of the 'Shodō Girls'

The counterpart of this *Japonisme* diffusion through an international network reveals the big influence that, on the other side, Euro-American performing arts and globalization of media have on Japanese tradition and disciplines inside Japan. As just mentioned at the beginning of this essay, once again in the history of Japanese art, a new trend is starting and being conducted by the female world, in this case by young girls called the '*shodō* girls' (書道ギャール *shodō gyāru*). A very enthusiastic and energetic movement sprang from the calligraphy clubs in the high schools that has rapidly gathered fans and new performers also thanks to the fact that it has been chosen as subject of a television series and in 2009 it became a film titled *Shodō Girls – Watashitachi no Koshien* by the director Ryūichi Inomata (*Shodō gāruzu!! Watashitachi no Kōshien* 2010).

Based on facts, the film depicts a group of high school girls who revitalize calligraphy through unconventional, modern means: simultaneously drawing multiple characters with giant brushes and colours onto a massive piece of paper, dressing kimonos or uniforms specifically made for the event, while dancing choreographies on J-pop music. The result is a real calligraphic performance, on which each school's club competes with the others once a year, during what is called 書道パフォーマンス甲子園 *Shodō* *pafōmansu Kōshien* (Shodō performance Kōshien) performed in big sport spaces with a committee of professional judges. This kind of calligraphic performance on giant paper is not new in the Japanese art tradition – the same Katsushika Hokusai (1760-1849), master of *ukiyo-e* painting, did it as well as performance on the smallest surface of a single rice – but what is new here is the content each team writes, certainly not traditional *shodō*, but a colorful, enjoying form of writing art responding to the contemporary *kawaii* pop-trend.[24]

If academic calligraphy considers this kind of performance a destruction of the original 'Way of calligraphy', based on discipline and on following historical masters' styles, despite this formal consideration I feel this phenomenon more like a profound transformation (as it was for female diaries in the Heian period or female photography in 1990's). A traditional expression of Japanese culture finds a way to become attractive to, and to be rediscovered by young generations mixing with their languages. And more, creating a new form of art that is no more Japanese calligraphy, but a new thing: that takes the form of art performance, that means more generally an international form of art appealing both internationally and, for this reason, even more appealing also to young Japanese generations watching and searching for foreign models. A new art result derived from globalization or a form of 'self-Japonisme'?

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Those in Darkness Drop from Sight
Precarity in the Theatre of Okada Toshiki

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Abstract Okada Toshiki (*1973) founded his theatre company Chelfitsch in 1997 and has drawn considerable attention ever since. In his works he combines hyper-colloquial Japanese with a unique choreography. As a child of the so called 'lost generation' he belongs to the generation of young Japanese that was especially hard hit by the economical crisis after the bubble's collapse after 1990. As a result of the government's deregulation, economic inequality (*kakusa shakai*) began to grow and the gap between rich and poor widened. Many young people of that generation had to face social decline and were forced to accept long working hours or low wages as 'working poor'. The conditions of precarious work became the reality of many Japanese. Okada's work is discussed in the context of his inspirational sources and this article questions his methods as a new form of Japanese theatre.

Summary 1. Introduction. – 2. Socio-political Background. – 3. Topics in His Plays. – 3.1. *Hotto peppā, kūrā, soshite owakare no aisatsu* (Hot Pepper, Air Conditioner and The Farewell Speech, 2004/2009). – 3.2. *Watashitachi wa mukizuna betsujin de aru* (We are the Undamaged Others, 2010). – 3.3. *Zōgame no sonikku raifu* (Sonic Life of a Giant Tortoise, 2011). 4. Language/Body/Theory. – 5. Conclusion.

Und die andern sind im Licht.
Und man siehet die im Lichte
Die im Dunkeln sieht man nicht.
(Bertolt Brecht: *Die Moritat von Mackie Messer*
from *Die Dreigroschenoper*)

1 Introduction

The theatre director and playwright Okada Toshiki (*1973) founded the theatre company Chelfitsch in 1997, and has attracted considerable attention ever since. He was awarded the prestigious 49th Kishida Drama Award in 2005 for his play *Sangatsu no itsukakan* (Five Days in March). The piece tells the story of a young man and a young woman, who meet at a live concert in Shibuya, and decide to go to a love hotel after the show, where they stay for five days; meanwhile the war in Iraq begins (20 March 2003).

In *Five Days in March* Okada combines a very plain and natural, hyper-colloquial Japanese with a unique choreography, features distinguishing most of his works. In the following years Okada was invited to many major theatre festivals, both in Japan and abroad. In 2007 he was invited to Brussels, to participate in the *Kunsten Festival des Arts*, and then to many other important theatre festivals in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Austria, Italy, and many more. In this respect, 2007 marked the starting point of his international career, which took place mostly, though not exclusively, at European festivals. The following year, in 2008, he won the Ōe Kenzaburō Prize, a literature prize for his novel based on *Five Days in March* titled *Wareware ni yurusareta tokubetsuna jikan no owari* (The End of the Special Time Given to Us).

The name Chelfitsch is a word coined by Okada based on the English word 'selfish' mispronounced in a childish way. The seemingly childish attitude and the focus on the 'self', instead of on the group, take us to the next part of my paper, the socio-political background.

2 Socio-political Background

As a child of the so-called 'lost generation', Okada belongs to the generation of young Japanese that were especially hard-hit by the economic crisis following the collapse of the bubble after 1990.

As a result of government deregulation (*kisei kanwa*), economic inequality (*kakusa shakai*) began to grow, and the gap between rich and poor widened. Older employees were frequently hit by the so-called 'restructuring measures' (*risutora*), a euphemism generally used for downsizing and job cuts in the '80s and '90s in Japan. Many young people of the so-called 'Generation Y' (born between 1975 and 1989) had to face social decline, and were forced to accept long working hours or low wages as 'working poor', often working alongside permanent staff as underprivileged temporary dispatched workers (*haken rōdōsha*). The Worker Dispatch Act (*Rōdōsha hakenhō*), which was enacted and then deregulated, enabled Japanese corporations to use dispatched workers, giving them the powers to remove them from their workplaces as a business transaction and not within the bounds of an employer-employee relationship. Other young people, who were unable to find work, (be)came to be called 'net cafe refugees' (*netto kafe nanmin*), or 'cyber-homeless' (*saibā hōmuresu*).

The conditions of precarious work became the reality of many Japanese, who were shocked by this development as they had thought that Japan and its economical growth and stable employment were unstoppable, and that a strong 'Japan Incorporated' would continue forever. All these social changes led to new discussions on poverty in Japan.

3 Topics in His Plays

The everyday life of young people is the common ground in all of Okada's works, including almost everything from sexual intercourse to working conditions. The actors on stage repeatedly talk about their life plans or their fears of the future. The fact that the actors talk about things is crucial; they generally do not enact them. Okada poses ethical questions on happiness and poverty, and scrutinises how we live, or should live, as social beings.

Thoughtful monologues oscillate between mental sharpness and meaningless chatter. Fruitless interaction and miscommunication can be seen as a sign of loneliness or social isolation, on the one hand, but also reflects a struggle to develop a new language on stage.

3.1 *Hotto peppā, kūrā, soshite owakare no aisatsu* (Hot Pepper, Air Conditioner and The Farewell Speech, 2004-2009)

Hot Pepper, Air Conditioner and The Farewell Speech are three short, related pieces that were put together in 2009 (*Air Conditioner* is actually older and was already staged in 2004). To start with, we hear music by John Cage and John Coltrane. This is juxtaposed by acute, yet humorous, insights into human behaviour conveyed with gentle irony. And then there is the aspect of Okada's work that makes him so unique: the movement. In these three pieces, Okada seems to have gone further than ever before in exaggerating habitual gestures, emphasising personality traits through body language. In his previous work, the exaggeration served to de-familiarise everyday situations and conversations by creating a disjunction between speech and gesture. In *Hot Pepper, Air Conditioner and The Farewell Speech*, the movement has taken a step further, and while retaining the idiosyncratic gestural language appropriate to each character and situation, it has become a finely choreographed dance that merges body and text with the music.

As in his previous plays, Okada explores the preoccupations of young workers from his own generation in a rapidly changing Japan. The pieces, however, show young people obsessed with superficialities, avoiding the issues that affect their lives so deeply. The pieces raise questions about passivity, not only in Japan, but throughout our global society.

In *Hot Pepper*, three temporary workers in the staff canteen discuss the restaurant arrangements for a colleague who has been fired. The conversation is trapped by trivialities and repetitions as each character returns time and time again to the same point. One is fixated on the type of food they should choose, having bought a copy of a monthly magazine on food and restaurants in Tokyo [Hot Pepper]; another proposes a dish whose main ingredient is offal, which we later discover to be her own particular favourite, justifying her choice with a long speech about the healthiness of another ingredient, chives (*nira*). A third is obsessed with the idea that the permanent staff should arrange leaving parties. And then they decide that they should all state what type of food they like best so as to facilitate their own departure, and that is when we discover that, not only are their choices for this particular party determined by their own preferences, but also that they all expect to be fired soon.

Body language, taken to an extreme, expresses character more than the text; the play's characters are fundamentally insecure individuals, lacking in social graces and frightened to stick their necks out. Unaccustomed to taking initiative, expressing opinions or even independent thought, possibly uncertain of new hierarchies within the workplace, they circle around each other gauchely, unaware that their physicality betrays them.

In *Air Conditioner*, two permanent employees, a man and a woman, discuss the thermostat of the air conditioning, which is always set at 23 degrees. When the woman, who sits just below the vent and is always cold, switches it to a higher setting, someone always turns it down again. The man is very understanding, and it is soon obvious to the spectators that they are attracted to each other. While the discussion about the thermostat fails to develop much beyond a repetition of the basics, we see the couple's movements growing out of proportion to the topic as the music reaches a peak and they are almost dancing on the spot in unison, at times relatively touching, but never quite transcending that invisible boundary of the socially-acceptable distance.

Finally, in *The Farewell Speech*, we are introduced to the departing colleague, who has been asked to give her own farewell speech. As only two of the six employees on stage are permanent staff, the audience is invited to reflect on the office rituals that evolved in an age when loyalty to the group was an offshoot of lifelong commitment to and from the company. This young woman taking her leave is embarrassed by her situation, by giving a speech she is singled out from the multitude. Her nerves are apparent in her hilarious stream-of-consciousness chatter about her shoes and how she imagines them to be penguins, even to the extent that she is afraid someone will ask her to get up from her desk to do some photocopying when the right shoe, the female, has laid her egg. She goes on to talk about leaving home for her last day at work and how she couldn't avoid, much as she tried, stepping on a cicada dying on her doorstep. This is delivered with a recognisably everyday movement transformed into a dance to music by John Coltrane, following the logic of the speech by illustrating steps in the high-heeled shoes, but rhythmically adhering to Coltrane's patterns and moods. The other five employees stand by, listening.

3.2 *Watashitachi wa mukizuna betsujin de aru* (We are the Undamaged Others, 2010)

The piece *We are the Undamaged Others* features a wealthy young couple that express their financial status by moving from one place to another; from the 7th floor, where they now live, to an apartment on the 25th floor when they will move into a bigger and better condo tower. Upward social movement is expressed literally. But all of a sudden, a young man, who is not so wealthy, appears and questions the residents via the intercom about happiness. The rich young woman says:

> I think becoming happy,
> is something anyone can achieve easily.
> For happiness is something
> that can result from tiny little things.
> The reason I am happy is because of that.
> In other words, because anyone can achieve it,
> I too can achieve happiness, that's all there is.
> (Unpublished translation by Aya Ogawa, courtesy of Chelfitsch)

But then the stranger rings on her doorbell and engages her in a conversation via intercom:

> «Excuse me».
> «Who is it?».
> «I don't think you know who I am, but I know.
> I know that you are happy.
> And I am not. I'm not happy.
> I am standing here so that you may know that.
> I am standing here like this only for that reason.
> There is no other reason».
>
> «That's right.
> I am not a happy being.
> Because, unlike you,
> I never feel myself being happy.
> In any given moment that I am living,
> I cannot feel happiness.
> In fact, it's quite the opposite.
> I am not happy.
> The longer I think so, in my life,
> as time goes by,
> I feel it more and more strongly.

If I were to give the reasons why,
one of them, of course, is the question about money.
I’m in financial difficulties.
That is why I am not happy».
«Did you just think that
what I’ve said now was irrelevant?
Even if someone is in financial difficulties,
if that person has something that compensates
for it in abundance
and by, ‘something’,
I mean something which helps you feel happy,
even if you don’t have anything else,
and if you have that, you ought to be able to
draw yourself into a state of happiness.
And if you don’t have that thing, even if you aren’t
in financial difficulties, you won’t ever be happy.
Is that what you believe?».

«I am not asking for money.
In which case, why am I here?
I am not happy.
And I would like you to know that I am not happy».
«Not being happy, exists on the outside of
being happy,
as if wrapping it around.
The reason I am talking like this in front of you,
is not because I believe that by talking like this,
my situation will change, of course, for the better,
or that I am capable of
changing the situation on my own.
Is that because I believe that
something like that would never happen?
I would like you to know, that I am not happy.
The reason I am standing here is only for that reason.
So, you must not think of me as a nuisance.
You shall listen to me as I stand here in front of you,
in your line of vision,
and you shall listen to me talk, respectfully,
explaining that I am not happy, unlike you.
And even after you’ve heard enough,
you must not think that you don’t want to hear any more.
I will periodically, from here on,
make my presence felt by you,
my unhappy existence will be placed

where you can observe with your eyes and ears.
I will do that, because it is okay to do so,
and whenever I come,
you shall be willing to unlock the door,
and you shall always keep the door open, unlocked».
(Unpublished translation by Aya Ogawa, courtesy of Chelfitsch)

The stranger breaks into their daily life and easy normality, staying there as a momentum of nuisance and irritation.

3.3 *Zōgame no sonikku raifu* (Sonic Life of a Giant Tortoise, 2011)

In the *Sonic Life of a Giant Tortoise*, the most recent of the Chelfitsch productions, happiness again plays a central role. The piece is about a group of thirty-somethings, well-off but unhappy, and questioning themselves about their dreams, partnerships and life plans. They reflect on their everyday lives and working conditions, and on the feeling of being trapped in a grey, daily routine.

«I think it's mistaken, if you're trying to impose the logic that everyday would be more fun if we could spend our days as if we were travelling».

«I can't understand what's so wrong about thinking that I want to travel.
Is that because I'm stupid?
The day-to-day is important. Is that some kind of philosophy? I know it's wrong for me to say this, but honestly, I don't like it. It's a lot of pressure. I want to travel».

«We should try to be more conscious, or think more about all the different events that are happening in the world. We should watch the world news like they are our own issues». (Unpublished translation by Aya Ogawa, courtesy of Chelfitsch)

4 Language/Body/Theory

In the fourth part I want to focus on the stage language, and on some theoretical implications that can be seen in Okada's works.

Even though his most recent productions show a trend towards a more conventional language usage, his earlier dramas became famous for his hyper-colloquial Japanese. Incomplete, elliptic phrases with sometimes halting but fast speech and frequent re-starts are a characteristic of his dramas, and reflect the influence of Hirata Oriza (*1962), one of the most important playwrights of the contemporary Japanese theatre world. His treatise *Gendai kōgo engeki no tame ni* (For a Colloquial Japanese Theatre) is one of the most influential texts to have been published on in contemporary Japanese drama since the 1990s. Assuming that all modern drama in Japan was influenced by the frequently clumsy translations of Western dramas, Hirata struggled in this treatise to attain an original 'Japanese' mode of stage language characterised by allusions, elliptic speech and less dramatic expressions.

In making use of such hyper-colloquial speech, Okada discusses language as a matter of thinking and communication, and his chaotic monologues seem to reference Heinrich von Kleist's essay *Über die allmähliche Verfertigung der Gedanken beim Reden* (1805-1806).

The body as the actor's genuine means of expression is used in juxtaposition to the text delivered. No illustrating gestures refer to the text of the play, body and speech are completely separate.

This acting style can be seen in the tradition of presenting against representing: the actors do not enact a role by becoming a certain character, they rather slide into a certain role and then back into the role of a distant narrator, which leads us to another important theatre theoretician, Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956).

In his short text *Kann die heutige Welt durch Theater wiedergegeben werden?*, Brecht states that only by understanding reality as being changeable can theatre fulfil its most prominent function. This is an aspect that Okada Toshiki is very interested in: using theatre to understand our world, not as an unalterable and fixed system, but as a changeable one.

5 Conclusion

Okada's work is original in conception and execution. It is not music theatre, or dance theatre as we know it. He draws on all types of everyday physicality: bending of the knees and the waist, gestures of the arms and the hands, nodding and shaking of the head, stepping from side to side or forward and backwards, or the twirling of a foot on the heel. But he also incorporates individual traits, problems with the hang of a tie, a cigarette packet falling out of a shirt pocket, stroking the wrinkles out of stockings, fiddling with a fan, which are repeated to comic effect. The music is uncut, so the text and movement are to a large extent determined in length and modulation by the melody.

As an audience, we are obliged to make a transition from the expectations incumbent on dialogue-based theatre, and our habitual modes of perception and interpretation, to embrace a totality of speech, movement and music that is remarkably well-integrated, and that yet, de-familiarises the everyday familiarity of each component.

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Nihilistic Practices of the Self
General Remarks on Nihilism and Subjectivity in Modern Japan

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Abstract The question of nihilism in Japan is treated from a cultural and philosophical viewpoint, aiming to provide some hints for a critical discussion. Through the perspectives of Foucault and Bourdieu, different cultural phenomena in modern Japan could be defined as 'technologies of the self' and '*habitus*': the practice of writing among some novelists; the practice of philosophy and (self-) awareness among thinkers influenced by Buddhism; as well as, in a completely different field, the practice of performing arts (dance, theatre, music), or martial arts (*budō*). The focus is on recognising two commonly spread hermeneutic tendencies: 1. Nihilism in Japan has been more often the problem of the individual than the problem of truth. 2. The debate on the individual and nihilism in Japan has not been dealt with in exclusively intellectual terms. Rather it has immediately referred to practical levels in which the dialectics between technologies of political control and technologies of the self have played a fundamental role.

Summary 1. Nihilism, Subjectivity and Practices in modern Japan. – 2. Applying the Concept of Nihilism to Japan. – 3. Nihilism and Practices of Writing in Japanese Modern Literature. – 4. Nihilism and the Individual in the Kyoto School. – 5. Nishitani and Nihilism.

1 Nihilism, Subjectivity and Practices in Modern Japan

The aim of this paper is to provide some hints for a critical discussion of the question of nihilism in Japan from a cultural and philosophical perspective. A debate on this theme requires an integrated interpretation of certain aspects that are often considered apart and that range from literature to political thought, from the history of education to philosophy. At the same time, it also requires avoidance of undue applications of certain Western hermeneutic categories to East Asian history. It is certainly easy to lapse into cultural particularism. Nevertheless, this risk should not prevent us from attempting to follow a third way between the adoption of universalist and potentially colonialist concepts, and the resigned acceptance of cultural fragmentation. This 'third way' may consist of starting to pay «close attention to the questions [Japanese philosophers] are trying to answer», since «it is easy to make the error of asking *our* questions of a philosopher from another tradition or time» (Kasulis 2009, pp. 216-217). Discussing nihilism in Japan, then, implies paying attention to the question of modernity in general (how to define modernity?), while at the same time asking whether there can be any variation in this historiographical scheme (is multiple modernity a possible concept? Or is modernity just a 'one-size-fits-all' case?), with regards to the allegedly specific Japanese modernity (is there a peculiar Japanese way to Modernity?). In this essay, this perspective is sought via Foucault's conception of 'technologies of the self', mainly in their dialectical relation with the 'technologies of control',[1] which refers to the problem of technology. This approach may provide viable alternatives to the straight juxtaposition between modern/non-modern, all too often improperly conflated with the Western/non-Western pairing. The question of technology in Japan may prove to be of paramount importance in reallocating the general discourse on Japanese intellectual history in Japan for the reasons that will later become clear. According to Foucault, the technologies of the self «permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection or immortality» (Foucault 1988, p. 18). These technologies of the self can function as the last line of cultural, political or social self-defence, and make the individual more resistant to the technologies of control whose goal is that of homogenising social, political or cultural space. Their role can be that of variously balancing external pressure with internal urges, mitigating the conforming strength of social and political practices, and making the individual more conscious of him/herself, or negotiating the meaning of individuality in a country like Japan which, due to its cultural history, had to find its own path in these matters.

Since Foucault was mainly dealing with classical Western culture, his position on this theme should be adjusted in the light of the ways in which Buddhist and Daoist practices handle 'control' over oneself: a simple extension of **control** over the aspects that the Ego does not command could be counter-productive since this very ego represents the fundamental problem to be solved by those religious paths. In Buddhist terms, control

1 The French philosopher draws a distinction between four types of technology, that is: technologies of production; technologies of sign systems; technologies of power and control over the others and, finally, technologies of the self, which have close links with each other. The importance of this theme in Foucault's thought is admitted by Foucault himself, who began his work as a research project on normalising training in the modern state (e.g. the institutions of mental hospitals and prisons) and turned in his last years to the individualising practices in classical culture (see Foucault 1988, 2001).

cannot be considered as ultimate, but only as part of conventional truth.[2] For these reasons, Foucault's position should fruitfully work together with Bourdieu's idea of *habitus*, namely:

> systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them (Bourdieu 1980, p. 53).

In other words, from the perspective of intellectual history, the technologies of the self in modern Japan may be considered to have as their goal the attainment of certain *habitus* that work as individuating factors, **even beyond the control of the subject**.

Seen from a Foucaultian perspective, different cultural phenomena in modern Japan could be defined as technologies of the self: the practice of writing among some writers; the practice of philosophy and (self-) awareness among thinkers influenced by Buddhism; as well as, in a completely different field, the practice of performing arts (dance, theatre, music), or martial arts (*budō*) as elaborated by modern masters, who often changed the original aims of the fighting methods inherited from the past and discovered new possibilities in education or self-cultivation.[3]

Why mention *habitus* and technologies of the self in a discussion about nihilism? Although in this paper the limited space does not allow for much more than a general outline of the problem, the focus of this essay is on two main theses, the intention of which is not to demonstrate that all Japanese intellectuals have shared the same ideas on this question, but to recognise some diffused hermeneutic tendencies: 1. Nihilism in Japan has often been associated with the practical questions of citizenship/subjectivity/human being, and of how to configure the individual in relation to the state/society or the world. It has been intensely debated since the beginnings of the modernisation process, but, marking a certain contrast with Western intellectual history, it has been more often discussed in the context of the problem of the individual than the problem of truth. 2. The debate on the individual and nihilism in Japan has not been dealt with in exclusively intellectual terms. Rather it has been immediately referred to practical levels in which the dialectics between technologies of political control and

2 See e.g.: «One controls the mind through conventional truth, then destroys it by the highest truth» (Potter 1999, p. 297).

3 Examples of these personalities were Kanō Jigorō (1860-1938) founder of the Kōdōkan *jūdō*; Funakoshi Gichin (1868-1957), founder of Shōtōkan *karate*; Ueshiba Morihei (1883-1969), founder of *aikidō* and very close to the new religion Ōmotokyō.

technologies of the self have played a fundamental role. Hence, *habitus* and practices in general were both used to reabsorb the individualistic tide engendered by modernisation (thus becoming technologies of control, in Foucault's terms), or, conversely, **also inspired by nihilism**, they affirmed various forms of subjectivity, not necessarily convergent with Western ones, promoting political, social or cultural resistance, or at least mediating inner and outer worlds (therefore falling into the Foucaultian category of technologies of the self). To a certain extent, the very same technologies, especially those whose bodily involvement is very strong and which were highly codified by rituals, procedures and symbolism deriving from pre-modern knowledge, could be used both as normalising or individualising technology, due to the ambiguous nature of the body itself, which is what makes the individual part of the world, **and, at the same time**, what defines it as different from the world.

In fact, Confucian and Buddhist awareness that the educational and bodily factors play an important role in culture and society did not decrease in Meiji Japan, but underwent a process of adaptation to modernity, whose practical (political, ethical, religious-ritual and educational) overtones were often part of the background of both social engineers, who aimed to build an ideologically imbued citizenship in the new modern society, and of those intellectuals opposing or resisting such normalising training through individualising practices, the effects of which were bound to social, political, cultural, or simply individual spheres. These practices could aim at perfecting the individual, as well as simply opposing the mainstream mentality or bio-powers, sometimes to the point of destroying the individual in the attempt. Alternatively, some ventured to elaborate various forms of mediation. This essay will refer to two contexts of these practices of the self: literature and philosophy, but the scope of the phenomenon was (and somehow still is) much vaster.

2 Applying the Concept of Nihilism to Japan

In order to develop our subject, let us begin with the classic definition of nihilism by Friedrich Nietzsche, who in a famous fragment of his posthumous *Will to Power* wrote: «What does Nihilism mean? *That the highest values devaluate themselves*. The aim is lacking; "why?" finds no answer» (Nietzsche 1968, p. 9). Supreme values and transcendent ideals such as God, Truth, Good become meaningless, and lose their grip on reality. According to Nietzsche, this devaluation originated with the very creation of values by Socrates and Plato. Nihilism is the extreme backlash against the establishment of truth on a transcendent plain that has nothing to do with this world. Not only does it denounce the mechanisms of classical philosophies and religions from Plato to Christianity, from Kantism to Hegelism, but, more essentially, it rejects their conceptions of truth and their method of knowledge (the 'vertical' inquiry of 'why').

This reflection by Nietzsche is closely related to the European milieu, but how can it be applied to other cultural environments? Does this definition pose problems in cross-cultural comparison? For example, it has often been observed that social values have no transcendent foundation in East Asia, and that wisdom develops through 'horizontal' ('how') more than 'vertical' ('why') questions (cf. Kasulis 2009, pp. 223-224; Cheng 2000, p. 18). Nevertheless, maintaining that nihilism is based on Western ideas and hence must be absent from recent Japanese intellectual history sounds grossly orientalist or culturalist, and clashes with many historical and social phenomena that have occurred. Currently, Japan is at least as nihilistic as many other post-industrial countries. The following passage is an example taken from Murakami Haruki's *Dance Dance Dance*, in which a not specifically Japanese «advanced capitalistic society» is depicted as lacking any system of values:

> «Your system» [Makimura] said. […] «Your system may be beside the point these days. It went out with handmade vacuum tube amplifiers. Instead of wasting all your time trying to build your own, you ought to buy a brand-new transistor job. It's cheaper and it sounds better. And if it breaks down they come fix it in no time. When it gets old, you can trade it in. Your system may not be so watertight anymore, son. It might've been worth something once upon a time. But not now. Nowadays money talks. It's whatever money will buy. You can buy off the rack and piece it all together. It's simple. It's not so bad. Get stuck on your system and you'll be left behind. You can't cut tight turns and you get in everybody's way».
>
> «Advanced capitalist society».
>
> «You got it», said Makimura. (Murakami 1995, pp. 193-194)

How can we interpret Japanese nihilism if the theoretical premises that led European culture to reject those 'highest values' are missing? Is it possible to have a similar phenomenon in Japan via an alternative route that does not pass through the Nietzschean deconstructive genealogy of the «True World Becoming Fable» (Nietzsche 2009, p. 17)?

Moreover, from cross-cultural and historical perspectives, we could ask whether nihilism is a historical phenomenon, subject to historical and cultural contingencies, or a kind of universal 'spiritual category'. If it is a historical fact, how does it apply to one specific culture in general, and to Japan in particular? If it is not, a kind of contradiction may perhaps be at work between the negation of universal truth and the affirmation of universal negation, which may become a kind of universal truth in itself.[4]

There is at least one example of an important Western philosopher who dealt with Japanese nihilism: in the afterword to an essay on nihilism written in 1939,[5] the German philosopher Karl Löwith advances the thesis that Japan had completely misunderstood nihilism which, being eminently a European phenomenon, was understandable only in the context of European intellectual history, and, specifically, within the historical development of critical reason. This development found its climax in Hegel, dissolving into many rivulets after him, as with Kierkegaard, Marx and Nietzsche. Löwith identified nihilism with the destruction of critical reason, upon which human existence was still grounded. Without this cultural background, Japan could not understand nihilism as the final result of a critical rational process, but only as a chance to demonstrate its own cultural superiority. Faced with such an uncritical attitude, Löwith felt it necessary to justify European self-criticism, criticising Japanese patriotism and ingenuous pragmatism: Japan was only interested in material advancements and material technology, refusing any encounter with European civilisation, its spirit and history. What Löwith found most disappointing was that, in his view, the Japanese were almost completely lacking in any (self-) criticism. Although they studied and understood European philosophy, they did not draw any consequence for themselves from it. They did not apply criticism, but preferred to avoid oppositions, ignoring any logical consequences deriving from nihilistic critical assumptions and following social conventions and compromises (Löwith 1983).

This position of Löwith's was based upon his limited and biased reading of Japanese culture: since he did not read Japanese, he did not realise that many intellectuals (both scholars and philosophers) were actually discussing (or practising) nihilism very seriously. Still, in his partial defence it should be pointed out that their discussions focused on a quite different, and hence less recognisable (for a European living in 1930s), approach to nihilism, which, more than its theoretical and hermeneutic aspects, considered its existential praxis in everyday life of the individuals.

In theoretical terms, this difference, which is extremely significant for the interpretation of nihilism in Japan, might be linked to the different

4 This topic could not be exhaustively dealt with here, especially through the means of a purely logical argument. Still, this essay intends to consider two opposite answers to such a question represented by Karl Löwith, who affirms that the nature of nihilism is historical and cultural, albeit 'universal' in that it is deeply involved with reason; and by Nishitani Keiji, who, on the contrary, indicates its trans-national and even trans-historical character, with reference to its existential, more than rational, trait.

5 The essay was entitled: «Der Europäische Nihilismus. Betrachtungen zur geistigen Vorgeschichte des europäischen Krieges» and was published in Japanese the following year in three issues (from September to November) in the review *Shisō* (Thought), while the philosopher was in Japan, fleeing from racial persecution. See Löwith 1983.

foundations of values, which in the Euro-American countries, as well as in the Abrahamitic religions, are theoretical, transcendent and religious (God is the guarantee of ethics), but practical and socio-political in Japan (ethics is socially defined and is immediately translated into a socially determined set of deeds that must be performed, or must be accomplished according to rigidly codified procedures). In European intellectual history, nihilism has gone hand in hand with the destruction of the philosophical (Platonism) and religious (Christianity) transcendent world, epitomised by what is known as 'God's death', finally resulting in the disruption of all systems of values that ushered in the fully secularised world. Nihilism in Japan was collocated in a different configuration: there was no rebellion against gods or Buddhas, no high-sounding announcement of God's death. No 'transcendent value' was devalued, because social values in Japanese culture have less of a theoretical, and more of a practical nature, so that ideo-praxis and ortho-praxis are more natural than ideology (and orthodoxy). Hence, the demolition of high standards was accomplished in a way more consistent with Japanese cultural space. More specifically, in Meiji Japan, the questioning of social and political values was often accomplished by intellectuals through individual, bodily practices, which found their target in the political and religious national beliefs and rites created by Meiji ideologues to promote public civic religion (the so-called *kokka shintō*, State Shintō), as well as in the set of ethical and educational civic tenets and procedures centred around the Imperial Rescript on Education (*Kyōiku chokugo* 1890), or merely in social common sense and its related *habitus*. Far from juxtaposing reason to God or Truth, nihilism in Japan opposed two different kinds of practices or *habitus*: those defined by the individual resisted the nationally or socially established ones.

In such a context, the debate on individualism and subjectivity was paramount. For example, in a study about early post-war Japan, J. Victor Koschmann isolated «an articulate concern on human agency, manifested in a debate on active subjectivity» or *shutaisei* (1996, p. 1). Still, the concern for this theme, whose cultural and political overtones affected the development of national identity and ideology, can be traced back much earlier: Kōsaka Masaaki long ago pointed out that after the Sino-Japanese war (1895) the subject had become a fundamental issue in the Japanese intellectual and artistic debate (1958, pp. 289 ff.), but, as Sakai Naoki has affirmed, similar concerns appeared even among late Edo intellectuals (1997). Starting from the late Meiji onwards, the question of individualism had a tremendous cultural and political impact on the process of modernisation.[6]

6 Suffice it here to mention the examples of the Freedom and People's Rights Movement (*jiyū minken undō*) in which subjectivity was said to function as a precondition of modern democracy, as well as some writings by the philosopher and politician Katō Hiroyuki (1836-1916), who, in his *Jinken shinsetsu* (A New Theory of Human Rights, 1882), wrote: «The theory

Still, this was not only an ideological process. It involved the entire sphere of practical knowledge, of *habitus* and assimilated social and national dispositions that were meticulously defined by officers whose target was the creation of the 'body of the nation' (or *kokutai*), which was not meant to be a metaphorical expression, but more essentially expressed the assimilation within one's own body of the dispositions defined by the nation and, at the same time, the nation as a body (see also Kasulis 2009, p. 228). The construction of the individual in modern Japan was radically influenced and transformed by the new modern **technologies** of control and of the self, which, through their negotiation, provided the groundwork for a radical redefinition and re-adjustment of human being in modernised Japan.

The state functionaries bound their political and religious ideology to strategies of indoctrination and normalisation, spread through a capillary organisation centred around the Imperial Rescript that created a common space of shared practices, pivotal for the construction of the Japanese nation, and that went so far as to determine many everyday practices, which ran parallel and reinforced to the ideological level.

Although for opposing reasons and aims, both the champions of social homogenisation and the forerunners of individual freedom shared similar interests in practices, represented by technologies of control and technologies of the self, respectively, both frequently inspired by the Buddhist and Confucian practical heritage, and aptly transformed to match the needs of modern world. Unavoidably, any discussion surrounding the construction of the individual in modern Japan (nihilism included) had to confront those practices of individualisation or processes of normalisation elaborated from pre-modern practices of the self. From this perspective, at least three orientations can be identified. The first was a standardising inclination, represented by the *tennōsei* (the Japanese emperor system) ideology supported by the Imperial Rescript, and by all the ethical, political, anthropological and religious traditions and habits invented in order to uniform Japanese social practices, and to create a common, national cultural space.[7] The second orientation consisted of the individualising tendencies that, to varying degrees, aimed at passively or actively, consciously or not, opposing, or at least negotiating, this new-born national culture, keeping their distance from the social tide toward integration. These individualising tendencies were expressed by means of active opposition – the approach adopted by anarchist and communist militants – or by means of passive and indirect resistance – like the practice of writing among many *shishōsetsu*

of natural rights had no validity. We are not 'endowed' with rights; we *acquire* them. For the first time I saw clearly that our rights are those which we as individuals have been able to acquire... I saw clearly that our individually acquired rights are inextricably tied to the fortunes of our country» (as quoted in Kōsaka 1958, p. 152).

7 On *tennōsei* ideology, see Gluck 1985. On invented modern Japanese traditions, see Vlastos 1998.

(I-novel) authors. Finally, a mediating tendency is identifiable, in the search for a point of balance between individualising and standardising inclinations, as with some of the disciplines modernised during the Meiji period, for example, martial arts, whose founders were often very interested in the educational, ethical and political consequences of their activities for the practitioners. Such a mediating tendency in the field of philosophy can be observed in the theoretical efforts of the Kyoto School.

3 Nihilism and Practices of Writing in Japanese Modern Literature

The case of the writer and critic Takayama Chogyū (1871-1902) epitomises the lacerations between society, the nation and the individual in the period preceding the rise of naturalism, but more essentially highlights the extent to which these themes were tightly bound together in Meiji Japan. His intellectual history was characterised by unexpected, dramatic changes revealing a painstaking pursuit of balance between the state and the individual. In the first phase (1894-1897), Takayama believed in an equilibrium between these two moments, in a kind of romantic activism: the individual must be set free to develop him/herself, while at the same time being a conscious and conscientious citizen of the state. However, this harmony did not last, and Takayama abruptly turned to nationalism in the period 1897-1900. He began to venerate the Imperial Rescript, and followed its ideology, probably as a means to overcome «the sense of crisis which was prevalent after the military victory of 1895» (Kōsaka 1958, pp. 306-307). Nevertheless, this ideology soon dissatisfied him, and led him to the radical individualism of the years 1900-1902, in which he praised Nietzsche and the 'aesthetic life' (*biteki seikatsu*) as the only manner of satisfying instincts, raised to the status of the only life values, higher than morality and knowledge (Kōsaka 1958, p. 310).

Takayama's vitalism anticipated naturalism (*shizenshugi*), whose importance by far exceeded that of a short-lived literary movement: it represented the beginnings of modern Japanese individualism and its practices (in the form of autobiographical/fictional writing). Naturalism has often been linked to nihilism, as in the following statement by the poet Ishikawa Takuboku (1886-1912):

> From the very outset, man stands alone. The unbearableness of this loneliness leads him to build religious fantasies, leads him to have visions of glory, or wealth, or power. When he senses the loneliness of life, this feeling of *I stand alone*, this is the finish, everything becomes useless. Nothingness! Emptiness! [...] The only phrase that naturalism has been able to teach man is 'suit yourself.' There is neither good nor evil, beauty nor ugliness, only 'bare facts.' This is what we are left

> with – bare facts! Suit yourself! What lonely comfortless words! And yet there is no alternative. The possession of *absolute freedom* makes 'emptiness' implicit (as quoted in Kōsaka 1958, pp. 472-473).

As with nihilism, naturalism manifested a stubborn rebellion against the social conventions, and epitomised the destruction of social (more than religious or theoretical) values. Conversely, it implied the affirmation of the individual, considered as the only knowable thing. Still, naturalist faith in 'sincerity' (*makoto*), and the subsequent description of 'pure facts' (of the self) were distant from the nihilistic total lack of faith represented by later writers like Masamune Hakuchō (1879-1962).

However, what typifies Japanese nihilism in literature, especially in the years of modernisation, is the tendency to emphasise the practical dimension of writing: many writers considered the exercise of writing as a technology of the self in every respect, through which to become, and explore, one's self more and more, acquiring independence from society, not necessarily in the positive, but sometimes also in the self-destructive sense, as an opposition to the powerful modern Japanese bio-powers. From such a perspective, for instance, the conception of writing as a practice closely linked to the writer's life can be detected both among the idealists of the Shirakabaha (White Birch School), such as Shiga Naoya (1883-1971), and the most nihilistic (and later) writers of the so-called Buraiha (Undependable School), such as Dazai Osamu (1909-1948) or Sakaguchi Ango (1906-1955). Writing as a practice of the self was quite common among literates: we can find a similar awareness of this theme in romantic writers like Kitamura Tōkoku (1868-1894) and Kunikida Doppo (1871-1908), who emphasised the importance of the interior world and the role of literature in developing oneself, but also among naturalist writers: Shimazaki Tōson (1872-1943) used writing not only as a practice to denounce old discriminations, but also to explore the new geographies of his own self, as a modern individual clashing with the social rules. Tayama Katai (1871-1930), who wrote his most famous novel *Futon* (The Quilt, 1907) from his (almost) autobiographical perspective, created a form of individual resistance in which real life and fiction were inextricably bound together, inaugurating a current, which was to have an enormous influence on the subsequent I-novel (*watakushi shōsetsu*) writers (see Bienati 2005, pp. 16 ff.). After the Sino-Japanese War (1895), these authors eluded direct confrontation with society, having lost any hope of conditioning the state or community, and restricted themselves to writing about their own selves in an autobiographical/fictionalised manner. In so doing, they resisted the normalising social ideology and rules, and opposed the apparatus of social conventions and etiquette that was moulding the individual in modern Japan. This approach to the individual was so influential in Japanese literature that its effects lingered on after the Pacific War, and echoes of this idea can still be found among novelists of today, such as Murakami Haruki, not to speak about contemporary film makers such as Sono Shion.

4 Nihilism and the Individual in the Kyoto School

The intellectual inquiry into the modern subject was also dominant among the most important philosophical school of modern Japan, i.e. the Kyoto School (*Kyōto gakuha*), which inscribed in its philosophical agenda a radical re-discussion of (European and modern) subjectivism. These intellectuals shared with naturalist writers their search for re-configuring human beings as modern individuals, although they seemed to draw more fully from pre-modern or trans-modern theoretical and practical sources. Nishitani is a good example of 'nihilistic practices of the self' in philosophy: he interpreted nihilism from the perspective of the existential, living self, taking inspiration from pre-modern Buddhist practices of self-awareness. His was not an isolated case but it epitomises an important orientation for many Japanese intellectuals, who not only developed a theoretical concern for subjectivity, but whose philosophical, political, social, religious, artistic and literary interests very often went hand in hand with various **practices** regarding the newly acquired (and often still blurry) individuality, which functioned as a counterpoint to those standardising practices developed by the regime ideologues.

Although the major modern Japanese philosopher Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945) devoted most of his intellectual efforts to the question of practical philosophy, particularly at the end of his complex theoretical development (Cestari 2009), he did not directly touch on the problem of nihilism. Nevertheless, in the Kyoto School the relationship between nihilism and the individual is well represented: although they used different approaches and diverging perspectives, both Tanabe Hajime (1885-1962) and Nishitani Keiji (1900-1992) were conscious of the importance of the link between nihilism and the individual, and proposed different analyses of the phenomenon.

Tanabe aimed to reabsorb the individual in the nation, proving to be very close to the regime's ideology, precisely because he was aware, in a more instinctual rather than a clearly conscious manner, of the importance of nihilism and its relationship with the individual. In fact, although his writings make no extensive use of the word 'nihilism', his *Shu no ronri* (Logic of Species) somehow came to grips with this theme in the shape of a clash between the individual's 'will to power' (*kenryoku ishi*) and the society's 'will to life' (*seimei ishi*). Tanabe's 'solution' consisted of conferring on the nation-state the role of medium between these opposite and ultimately irrational attitudes (Cestari 2008). If, as with Clifford Geertz, 'ideology' provides «maps of problematic social reality» which help clarify the individual's place in the world (Geertz 1973, pp. 193 ff.), such a solution was fully ideological, since the liberticidal state of wartime Japan was considered as the key to overcoming the aforesaid clash and to helping the individual to find his/her place in the world.

Nishitani was the philosopher of the Kyoto School who most powerfully felt the need to link the discussion around nihilism to the question of the self and its practices of self-awareness. With him, the question of nihilism became **the** pivotal problem. He provided one of the deepest and most original readings of nihilism ever elaborated in Japan. Due to the complexity and the richness of his approach, which would deserve much more than these few pages, this paper will only provide a brief outline of some aspects of his perspective on Japanese nihilism. This theme is dealt with by Nishitani, especially in the book *Nihirizumu* (Nihilism), a collection of lessons held between 1949 and 1956 (Nishitani 1990), in which he discusses many European thinkers, such as Nietzsche, Stirner and Heidegger, reconstructing post-Hegelian European philosophy. An entire chapter is devoted to nihilism in Japan. This essay is extremely important for our paper, even if nihility is also further examined in the work *Shūkyō to wa nanika* (What is religion?) (Nishitani 1982). Nishitani's position is the result of a large set of direct or indirect influences: from Buddhism – especially Zen – to Western philosophy – particularly, Heidegger and Nietzsche. On the specific question of Japanese nihilism, his interlocutor has the name of Karl Löwith (Nishitani 1990, pp. 176 ff.), whose criticism of the Japanese intelligentsia has been mentioned before.

5 Nishitani and Nihilism

Nishitani takes Löwith's criticism very seriously. He agrees with Löwith's idea that modernisation has weakened Japanese culture and that its past has been forgotten, whereas in Europe Christianity and philosophy still oppose nihilism (Nishitani 1990, p. 175). Hence, Japanese 'tradition' no longer exists and has been replaced by a hollow void. This situation is further worsened by the fact that the Japanese generally fail to realise how strong nihilism is in their country. Therefore, in Nishitani's opinion, Löwith is right in affirming the importance for the Japanese of a critical confrontation with European culture. Still, Nishitani does not consider nihilism as a purely European matter. Far from confining it to Europe, he already sees nihilism spreading as a global phenomenon that now also casts its shadow upon Japan (Nishitani 1990, pp. 176-177).

However, it is in their interpretation of its general sense that the two philosophers are most distant and reveal a strong disagreement concerning the correct manner of doing philosophy. If Löwith criticised the Japanese intelligentsia for not having understood nihilism from the perspective of **critical** thinking, Nishitani reckons that **nihilism involves our very self**. At the beginning of his work, this thesis sounds provocative: far from interpreting nihilism primarily as a question of critical reason, he reads it immediately as an existential and practical condition. Such a problem can be properly dealt with only if it coincides with the question of the ego lacking sense, certainty, meaning and value (Nishitani 1990, pp. 1-2). Nihilism read as the problem of the self emerges after the collapse of the rational Subject, on which the sense of the world is based. With this destruction, the immediate, existential subject – which cannot be simply defined as either substance or reason – is finally revealed. Such a change of perspective is quite radical: a proper consideration of nihilism needs the subject to **identify itself** with nihilistic void. Hence, nihilism is not simply the loss of moral and religious values in general, or the lack of reasons and aims, but **is to be enacted as the full awareness of the end of the value and the sense of (my)self, in all of its practical, bodily and existential meanings**. Differently stated, it is a practical act of presence to oneself. From the Buddhist perspective, it could be considered as the deep, bodily awareness of one's own transitoriness and mortality. Underlying the difference between the ways of interpreting nihilism in Nishitani and in European metaphysical tradition does not imply the affirmation of any culturalist position (for instance, that, within European culture, nihilism was only theoretical and not practical, or that, in Japan, nihilism was only practical) but to be aware that Nishitani's understanding of nihilism is not grounded on a process of undermining metaphysical and theological assumptions, which has the consequence of translating it into practical behaviours and practices. Nishitani's position attests that nihilism is not oriented towards negating a metaphysical plane, and, **only after that**, the existential dimension, but that it is the direct negation of existence, a practical, bodily negation that influences the metaphysical, exclusively derivative world. To sum up, Nishitani's identification with nihilism does not begin with a purely intellectual affirmation of a theoretical thesis, but with a practical act of self-awareness, like an «experiment within the self» that this very self must perform (Nishitani 1990, p. 2), and, which, we should add, links the existential self-negation with the Buddhist practice of self-awakening. This approach may partially converge with Levinas' criticism, drawn against the pre-eminence of metaphysics over practice, that led the French philosopher to propose ethics as *philosophia prima*.

From such a perspective, Löwith's criticism toward the Japanese intelligentsia accused of not having exerted (self-) criticism is tacitly broadened and deepened by Nishitani so as to include the very European critical attitude, indirectly charged with being purely objectivistic (or subjectivistic) and **not** properly recognising the immediately thinking and living subject (Nishitani 1990, p. 2). The Japanese philosopher rejects the idea that nihilism be reduced to a simple historical phenomenon, or a problem «about the essence of being human. […] Inquiry into the philosophy of history has remained within the standpoint of reflective observation: the one who observes and the one who is observed have been separated. […] Its standpoint remains one of *observing*. The habit of separating essence and phenomenon is a residue of just this approach» (Nishitani 1990, p. 5). This leads Nishitani to define an inquiry from the perspective of the individual, radically historical self, admittedly indebted to Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Heidegger:

> There must be a way of inquiring into history that is fundamentally different from the way the philosophy of history has been conducted up until now. The questioning itself must be historical and the inquirer unified within history. What is more, the inquiry must be conducted 'with passion' and existentially, so that the relationship between essence and phenomenon in history and humanity is realized existentially and thoroughly within historical existence. In other words, the great historical problems need to become the problems of the self. (Nishitani 1990, p. 5)

For the purpose of our discussion, we could say that this approach brings the spiritual subtlety of Buddhist meditative practices, and its roots in bodily existence of the self into the modern discussion on the technologies of the self. Replacing theoretical with practical questions, Nishitani aims to embrace Löwith's position, while at the same time further raising the bar: those who blame the lack of criticism among Japanese intellectuals would still miss the essential point, common to both Europe and Japan: the lack of radical **self**-criticism as individuals. In Nishitani's words, far from being a matter of reason, nihilism deals with our very bodily existence, our self-awareness as a practical act of being present to ourselves, and our condition. Such a radical doubt destroys all certainties and, **becoming our self**, discloses us as no-selves, thus awakening to 'the true suchness' of things. As J. Heisig points out, this is «not a simple *blanking* of the mind, but a disciplined *emptying* of mind», that goes «far beyond the bounds of a private mental exercise», up «to metaphysical insight into reality as such» (2001, p. 221). Hence, we should note, the roots are sunk in practice, not in metaphysics.

No doubt this reading is peculiar to Nishitani: never has nihilism been so clearly related to the theme of immediate, practicing self, at least among European philosophers. Such a position has deep relations with the Japanese modern cultural milieu, whereas it can be included in the general trend of those modern Japanese thinkers who approached nihilism from the perspective of the individual and his/her status in the modern world. Nishitani, thanks to his insight into the individual through his Zen Buddhist pre-comprehensions, plays an important role in developing alternative patterns of modern subjectivity, which he centres on the importance of the religious-practical act of self-awareness. Moreover, he seems to shift the paradigms of philosophical perspective, away from the classical, humanistic tradition towards a bodily and practical approach to human being. This move is accomplished through openly bio-political perspective, endowed with clearly religious overtones.

If we follow Roberto Esposito's interpretation of Heidegger's *Letter on Humanism* as expression of a deep awareness of the biological nature of human being which forces us to confront with what the German philosopher variously defined as 'life', 'world' or 'existence' and could not be sufficiently represented in humanism and its classical political philosophy (2004, p. 164), we can probably say the same also about Nishitani. There are however at least two main differences. On one hand, whereas Heidegger still considered «being in the world» as more important than life (Esposito 2004, pp. 166-167), Nishitani on the contrary seems to give priority to the «pre-philosophical», which nonetheless moves toward philosophy. Far from limiting his approach to the existential and philosophical perspective, the relationship between life and nihilism is repeatedly emphasized in his writings (Nishitani 1986, p. 24). On the other, thanks to the previous difference, his ultimately religious consciousness of nihilism, unlike Heidegger, acquires a clearly bio-political weight. In Nishitani's perspective, Buddhism and nihilism merge in the individual's life, becoming the sources of the practice of self-awareness. In the Japanese philosopher, truth is clearly bound to biological and emotional life of the individuals. Nihilism does not fuel rebellion against society, but inspires a continuous practice of existential and bodily doubt, which accompanies the entire life of an individual.

As a provisional conclusion, we could ask whether the experience of nihilism in modern Japan may be helpful to understand our world today. Certainly, the stress on practices is of outmost importance, since it helps to reinvent philosophy away from contemplation back to its ancient, practical vocation. Still, the main problem is what kind of practices can be or should be encouraged in our world. If we look back to Foucault definitions of technologies of control and technologies of the self, the first ones could hardly be desirable, although they have been massively used in modern countries. Still, in late modern world, the technologies of the self seem to be particularly exposed to the risk of nihilism and self-destruction, running the risk of engendering further deregulation, in a world increasingly liquid: if not wisely balanced, they may prove to intensify the destructive power of the permanent warfare state that characterizes the «liquid societies» of late modernity (see Cestari 2014. The idea of 'liquid society' is originally by Zygmunt Bauman). Today, a good balance between inner and outer urges is extremely hard to find. Nishitani's path, notwithstanding its strongly religious nature, which someone may find difficult to share, especially from a political perspective, is intended to avoid the risks of the extremes of bending the knee to the state, as Tanabe did, as well as of destroying oneself in the attempt to rebel to the state or society, as with many *shishōsetsu* writers. This search for mediation should be carefully considered.

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Japanese Discourses on Nuclear Power in the Aftermath of the Fukushima Disaster

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Abstract The critical damage to the Fukushima nuclear plant in March 2011 triggered more than nuclear debris. The explosions at Fukushima arguably blew up a few myths: 'cleanness', 'safety', 'cheapness', which decades of propaganda had successfully created and maintained, and provoked noticeable cracks in the hitherto hegemonic discourse on nuclear power. This paper offers a few observations on the discursive positioning of various social actors in the weeks and months following the disaster, from the pro-nuclear camp of industry officials to the anti-nuclear grassroots movements, and in the fora of institutional news media and social media. I maintain that the latter at least contributed to shaking up public consciousness, and reignited big political issues such as the public's right to information, the accountability of industry players, the rights of local communities, etc. Equally importantly, through the production of alternative 'packages' of images, metaphors and narratives, they facilitated the reshaping of the whole discursive space surrounding the nuclear, and increased the currency of an alternative discourse, which has the potential to have dramatic and long-lasting effects on Japanese social and cultural values.

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1 Introduction

The earthquake, and the consequent tsunami that hit Japan in 2011 caused not only telluric shocks and aftershocks, but represented arguably the biggest psychological blow in Japan's post-war history as well, forcing the country to a deep and painful reflection about the sustainability of its lifestyle, and the social, political, economic, environmental implications of its future policies.

The 'transition' alluded to in the title of the conference, where this paper was first presented, is interpreted here as the transition from one type of dominant discourse to another, i.e. from the fundamentally unquestioned pro-nuclear discourse that Japan adopted in the '50s, and that carried on until 11 March 2011, to the much more sceptical, critical, multifaceted, articulate discourse on the nuclear of the post-Fukushima era. I examine this discourse from the viewpoint of the language that constitutes it, and through various semiotic 'packages' in a variety of channels from mainstream news media to grassroots movements' posters and blogs, YouTube videos and the nuclear industry's digital archives, all public – hence social – acts of communication. I take these semiotic products to be instrumental in the construction, the maintenance of, or the challenge to specific 'discourses' about nuclear power, but not in any direct or mechanical way. The meaning of these signs follows patterned ways of thinking or talking about nuclear issues, but they also interact in complex ways with the social, historical, cultural context, and with particular ideological stances that individuals take *vis-à-vis* them.

Talking of ideologies may suggest that what I am examining here are just different ways, some biased perhaps, in which individuals evaluate the same facts, but look at them from different positions of interest. While I do maintain that different positions of interest are what determine different 'readings' of the same facts, in the case of the Fukushima disaster the very establishing of the mere facts (if they ever were established) carried such gigantic potential implications – e.g. the need for large-scale evacuations, the danger of mass panic, and the like-that blind faith in or defence of an ideology were tested to the limits. I argue that Fukushima constituted an instance of what Paul Chilton (1987) calls a «critical discourse moment», which shakes the current beliefs of language users, and makes the previously taken-for-granted discourse visible and susceptible to re-evaluation.

The Fukushima problem exemplifies several important issues, some of which have linguistic implications: for example, the public's right to information and the duty of accountability of both the government and private companies, the question of authority over and access to scientific information; the unequal distribution of the power to communicate, and so on – i.e. ultimately, issues of democracy – and also how these are affected by new information technologies. Access to the truth regarding nuclear issues, it could be argued, is intrinsically restricted – even before being subject to censorship – because of the specialised knowledge that it presupposes, including linguistic terminology, which is the purview of a restricted community of users. Those who wanted to keep themselves up to date with the events unfolding in Fukushima had to learn, or at least familiarise themselves with a language that the ordinary layperson was unlikely to have encountered before: Gray, Sievert, Becquerel, *naibu hibaku* (内部被曝=体内被爆 internal exposure). But the inaccessibility of specialist terminology was not the only linguistic hurdle that common citizens had to struggle with. They had to contend more broadly with a whole hegemonic discourse, which construed, over many decades, the question of nuclear power as a technological rather than social issue, an economic rather than philosophical issue.

Nuclear discourse, as Allan notes, «contains fragmentary traces of other, often contradictory, discourses (those of Nation, Sovereignty, Duty, Geopolitics, Economics, Defence, Deterrence, Peace, and Security)» (1989, p. 17). This paper cannot aim to provide an exhaustive account of the cultural history of nuclear power in Japan or engage in depth with these macro-themes, and my account will be necessarily sketchy and partial (regrettably, no account can be provided of TV coverage), but I will try to provide a brief outlook of diverse, competing, and occasionally paradoxically permeable narratives on the nuclear mobilised by the critical 'Fukushima moment', and with which the future Japan will have to engage. As Gamson and Modigliani note, «nuclear power, like every policy issue, has a culture. There is an ongoing discourse that evolves and changes over time, providing interpretations and meanings for relevant events». Through some of the clusters of «metaphors, catchphrases, visual images, moral appeals, and other symbolic devices that characterise this discourse» (1989, p. 1) I hope to provide a glimpse of the massive cultural shock that Japan experienced in the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster.

2 The Post-war Nuclear Discourse

Japan's enthusiastic embracing of a pro-nuclear policy since the late '50s is puzzling to most observers, given that Japan was the very (and only) country to have experienced the horror of the military use of nuclear power – Hiroshima and Nagasaki being the primal «critical discourse moment» on the nuclear (Chilton 1987, p. 16). Some historians, however, have recently argued that Japan's first steps to becoming a 'nuclear nation' were taken immediately after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, when its government yielded to US interest and utilised victims as subjects of research, rather than address them as victims. It was only in 1957 that the A-Bomb Victims Medical Care Law was enacted (Sasamoto 1999, pp. 89, 91; Hook 1987, p. 35); until then the Japanese Government had just stared at the results of various scientific studies on the biological effects of the atomic bombs. No significant anti-nuclear position existed in occupied Japan, mostly because of the secrecy about and the high specialisation required by nuclear matters, so that the debate remained quite unknown outside of the physicists' circles (Nakayama 2005, p. 336).

An important turning point in the global discourse on nuclear power was Eisenhower's speech *Atoms for Peace* at the United Nations in 1953.[1] Addressing both domestic and international concerns, it attempted to reshape the US democratic credentials after the bombing of Japan (and to distance itself, at the same time, from the undemocratic Soviet Union) and,

1 But see Gamson, Modigliani (1989, p. 12) on the remarkably quick reaction, already in the autumn of 1945, in the American media, by proponents of a discourse about peaceful uses of the atom.

crucially, broke the association of the atom with war (Jasanoff, Kim 2009; pp. 126 ff.), invoking a peaceful future where the atom would be controlled for civil use, expertise would be shared globally, and this new form of energy would be capable of sustaining rather than threatening life. A budget for nuclear development (tabled by the then member of the diet Nakasone Yasuhiro) was passed by the Japanese diet in 1954 (Yoshioka 2005a, p. 80; 2005a, pp. 109 ff.).

The 'Atoms for Peace' vision was congenial to Japan, in search of energy sources other than the coal that had sustained it during the war, and the oil shocks of the '70s further incited a major nuclear construction programme (Vivoda 2012, p. 7). Nationwide concern about nuclear power began arguably with the Lucky Dragon incident (the US test at the Bikini Atoll in 1954; Nakayama 2005, p. 338). Although the global debate about the safety of nuclear power that had begun in the 1960s did eventually spread to Japan[2] (Yoshioka 2005, p. 117; 2011, p. 155), and in spite of the growing local opposition during the '70s, including the wave of concern that the Three Mile Island accident of 1976 had sent around the world, the government embarked in the ambitious plan of the construction of nuclear plants, which mushroomed through the '80s. The discursive arena had been prepared, arguably, by the progressive marginalisation of anti-nuclear sentiment in the political discourse. Hook (1984) for example, details the birth of the metaphor of 'nuclear allergy' in the Japanese news media to refer to the Japanese people's particular sensitivity about nuclear matters, and notes how the nature of the metaphor (coupled with the absence of an equally powerful counter-metaphor) branded anti-nuclear stances as 'abnormal', 'pathological' elements of a healthy body culture in need of a 'cure'.

An extremely successful public relations campaign managed to transform the public's perception of the nuclear power from an enemy to a friend. This major feat was achieved through the use of a few discursive mechanisms: the systematic disassociation of nuclear power for military and for civil uses, which had already featured in the US *Atom for Peace* campaign, and, together with this, the promotion of other key themes, which later events arguably exposed as myths, such as **safety, energy security, cleanness, cheapness** (Gamson, Modigliani 1989; Koide 2011).

2 Particularly responsible for this were the activities of the Zengenren or Zenkoku genshiryoku kagaku gijustuka rengōukai (全国原子力科学技術家連合会 National federation of nuclear power technician), mostly composed of young scientists and technicians, the Gensuikin (原水爆禁止日本国民会 Japan council against atomic and hydrogen bombs) networking across all Japanese anti-nuclear groups, the birth of the Hangenpatsu undō zenkoku renrakukai (All-Japan liaison centre for anti-nuclear movements) and the Genshiryoku shiryō jōhō shitsu (原子力資料情報室 CNIC, Citizen's Nuclear Information Centre).

2.1 Public Relations Campaigns

The first of these themes – safety – is prominent in TEPCO's 1987 promotional film on the Fukushima power plant, which had begun operations in 1971. Five minutes into the film, we have heard the word *anzen* 安全 (safe) three times. As the film shows the insertion of fuel rods into the reactor, and the critical point of fission is reached for the first time, the narration proudly declares that «the […] light of the atom is lit, greeting the dawn of a new form of energy». We are shown prospering local communities, children growing up «in great health and vigour». Others have noted the significance of the musical packaging: «various musical melodies that suggest harmony between the nuclear plant and the environment runs [*sic*] throughout the background of the video. […] On the other hand, music evocative of a James Bond movie also cues in scenes that seem to suggest awe of the scale of the human technological and architectural accomplishment».[3] What we see at work here is a whole symbolic «package», to use Gamson and Modigliani's (1989) terminology, one that can be labelled as 'progress'. While allowing a moderate degree of variable positions within it (e.g. on the type of reactor that should be built), the «package frames the nuclear power issue in terms of the society's commitment to technological development and economic growth» (p. 4). A 'package' has a wider cognitive appeal than specific statements, and can withstand, by incorporating them within its logic, apparently countering events such as nuclear accidents.

The 'progress' package appears to have been (and to be) considerably resilient; nevertheless, especially after the Chernobyl accident of 1986, the government and nuclear industry felt the need for a sustained campaign, revamped again in the '90s, as can be evinced by the promotion video commissioned in 1993[4] by the agency now called the Japan Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA),[5] and distributed to facilities such as atomic energy museums, or the visitor centres of nuclear power stations. The lead character Pluto-kun represents the radioactive element used in the nuclear industry, saddened by the bad reputation he acquired for being first used for military purposes. He wants everyone to know the 'real' story of Plutonium («*hontō no hanashi o kiite kudasai*»), so – to the sugary soundtrack of *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star* – Pluto-kun attempts to rectify the many misunderstandings about him.

3 «FILM: Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant» 2011, available at `http://teach311.wordpress.com/author/remmid/`.

4 The video was available at the time of the conference, but has been removed «due to a copyright claim by the JAEA». A synopsis and some snapshots are still available at `http://pinktentacle.com/2011/03/cute-pluto-kun-cartoon-dispels-plutonium-fears/`.

5 The then Power Reactor and Nuclear Fuel Development Corporation.

Figure 1. *Pluto-kun* promotion video

First – he says – it is very unlikely that plutonium could fall into the wrong hands as facilities are absolutely secure.[6] It is thought to be poisonous and to trigger cancer, but if it touches your skin, it is not absorbed. Only if it enters the body through a wound it can collect in lymph nodes and spread to tissues and organs. Also, although there is some evidence that ingesting radium has caused cancer, so far – he continues – there is absolutely no evidence that Plutonium does. Some are concerned about what would happen if some bad guys dumped plutonium in a river and you drank that water for a long time. Your body – he reassures us – would just get rid of it naturally.

Figure 2. Plutonium is safe
if not injected in the bloodstream,
or inhaled

6 Interestingly, the theme of nuclear material getting in the 'wrong hands' is still a major concern in 2002 for UK citizens asked for their opinion about nuclear waste disposal (Bickerstaff et al. 2008, p. 157).

Pluto-kun is sad, because only his dangerous sides are emphasised, and he has become an instrument of threat (*odoshi*). Scary notions of radiation or of nuclear bombing come to the fore and get in the way, because of a lack of correct knowledge («*tadashii chishiki ga fusoku shite ite…*»). The new power plants[7] are far more efficient than before, and they fill humans' future with bright hope («*ningen no shorai wa akarui kibō ni michita mono desu*»). If we approach him with a peace-loving and warm heart he is not at all scary or dangerous («*heiwana atatakai kokoro de tsukiatte kudasareba, boku wa, kesshite osoroshii mono demo, kikenna mono demo arimasen*»), he will deliver an inexhaustible («*tsukiru koto no nai*») amount of energy, and we will be able to count on him («*tayori ni naru nakama na no desu*»).

It is hard to overlook that this is the same packaging of 'nuclear as progress' featured in the Fukushima plant's promotional video made 20 years earlier, along with the blatant propagandistic tenor: not only because the information provided would have appeared doubtful even at the time (how many of us would feel safe drinking plutonium-polluted water?), but also because of the insistence on 'correct' knowledge, which assumes only one type of admissible knowledge, and obscures the ideological nature of the pro-nuclear stance; the emphasis on rationality (scientific evidence is quoted as uncontroversial supportive evidence), which disqualifies emotional commentaries; the eerie mantra of a bright future built on nuclear power.

Also, what is arguably particularly Japanese is not just the use of anime for the purpose of indoctrination, but also the language of 'cuteness' – soft colours, a child's voice-over – which is all the more grotesque in light of the recent disaster, but, as we will see later, a recurrent aesthetic trope in many other forms of nuclear discourse.

2.2 Manufacturing Consensus

In spite of considerable and growing opposition to Japan's nuclear policy, especially from the '90s onwards, the discourse in the industry never changed substantially, and the same, obviously successful ideas were repackaged and reproduced time and again. If anything, the discourse increasingly emphasised the theme of **cleanness**, which, in fact, appears to be powerful enough to charm even environmentalist campaigners worldwide.[8] Ironically, the 'progress' package, which resonates with the larger cultural theme of technological progress and mastery over nature, en-

7 Pluto-kun refers here to Monju, the Tsuruga, Fukui Prefecture power plant, which will suffer accidents in 1995 and 2010.

8 See environmentalist George Monbiot's statement that the Fukushima disaster changed his mind and turned him into a supporter of nuclear technology.

gulfed an issue more unique to the ‘counter-theme’ (Gamson, Modigliani 1989, p. 5) of ecological sustainability. Smart sponsors («usually organizations, employing professionals specialists whose daily jobs bring them into contact with journalists» [Gamson, Modigliani 1989, p. 7]) managed this considerable feat, which exemplifies the complexity of the nuclear discourse at a time when the simple dualism between atoms for war vs. atoms for peace is no longer viable.

The leaflet *Consensus*,[9] produced by Japan’s Federation of Electric Power Companies (Denki jigyō rengōkai 2012) offers a notable example of the continuity of the progress package. Let us look at the cluster of various semiotic signs, at levels of both text (the message’s content) and layout (the design) conveying the federation’s message.

Figure 3. Front and back cover of the 2011 issue of the leaflet *Consensus*

Before we get to the content, the leaflet’s design itself strikes us as accessible and captivating, far removed from the ‘dry’ layout of scientific publishing material; the logos at the back of the leaflet index the company’s environmental concerns (left-hand side in Fig. 3), ‘certifying’ that the leaflet is printed with 100% recycled paper, vegetable oil ink, and a ‘waterless technique’. This symbolic reference to environmental concern is reinforced by the inclusion, in the *Questions & Answers* that organise

9 The earliest publication I could trace was from 2009, the latest from 2012, downloadable at http://www.fepc.or.jp/about_us/pr/sonota/1215332_1511.html. Apart from the opening – an apology for the inconvenience caused to the local communities and to the Japanese public, reassurances about the industry’s commitment to the restoration of secure facilities and public trust – the latest edition is predictably filled with sobering information about the Fukushima events and the subsequent (current) measures of containment, but shows little variation in content and style. It still maintains the ‘user friendly’ tone of previous editions in its use of questions posed in child-talk plain forms such as «*genshiryoku hatsudensho tte doko ni aru no?*» (where are the nuclear plants?).

the content, of the theme of cleanness, and the presentation of nuclear power as the 'clean' alternative to fossil fuel, for it arguably «reduces CO_2 emissions». This is arguably a myth consistently contested by many anti-nuclear scientists like Koide who notes that the government has recently begun to qualify this statement – as do the *Consensus* leaflets – by saying that nuclear plants «do not generate CO_2 *at the time of energy production* (*hatsudenji*)» (2011, pp. 114 ff. [italics by author], cf. Fig. 3). In fact a great amount of CO_2 is generated in the extraction, transportation and transformation of uranium, and by the plants' maintenance.[10]

Figure 4. *Consensus*: nuclear energy helps reduce CO_2

The other themes of arguable concern – energy security, safety – are also still present: security-wise, the leaflet explains that Japan, being a resource-poor country, needs to be as self-reliant as possible. With regards to safety (again the word *safe* is a mantra repeated 50 times in the 16-page leaflet), it explains that the amount of radiation that can leak from reprocessing plants is far lower than the levels of radiation that we receive from natural sources.

While the emphasis on the willingness to engage in a dialogue with the public (see Fig. 5, or the publication's very title) or undergo democratic processes of public scrutiny (for example, by means of regular meetings with local communities) appears to conform to traditional Japanese forms of decision-making, and, moreover, to respond to a very contemporary

10 This has become a powerful argument also in the debate in other countries: Bickerstaff et al. talk of «a new strand of political debate around energy policy, which re-frames nuclear power as part of the solution to the need for low-carbon energy options» (2008, p. 145). And as noted above, some environmentalists were the first to defend nuclear power after the Fukushima disaster, in the spirit of the Green Nukes movement (cf. Lisa Lynch 2012).

demand for transparency and accountability, the underlying discourse regarding knowledge has hardly changed at all: the public needs to be 'educated' by scientists and governments, and once 'correct' information has been disseminated, their misplaced mistrust will be overcome. Once again, not only does this view uniquely legitimise scientific knowledge, disqualifying as ignorance any argument based on concerns other than those of a positivist science (e.g. security issues such as the militarisation required by technology, political issues surrounding the relations between the beneficiaries of energy production and the communities in the plants' backyards, environmental issues around the disposal of nuclear waste, etc.), it also deceivingly presents the scientist's stance as monolithic, uncontroversial, and unquestioned.

Figure 5. *Consensus*: «You said, we did»

But what of this concern with transparency and accountability when the Fukushima crisis hit Japan? The demand for detailed information from domestic and international audiences in the immediate aftermath of the accident encountered two competing hurdles: an intrinsic one, to do with the subject matter – the specialised language of nuclear science, cryptic to lay audiences – and a political and social one – the need to maintain public order.

2.3 TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Power Company)

At the time of the conference, seven months after the disaster, uncertainty still reigned about what really happened at the nuclear plant; the official versions fed to the public were questioned, and many openly criticised the government and TEPCO (Tokyo denryoku kabushiki kaisha) for failing to provide transparent and reliable information. Many of TEPCO's early statements later appeared to be utterly false (such as the denial of explosions) while others appeared to be subtle semantic exercises. For example, early releases on TEPCO's official website (no longer available) reported that the amount of nuclear fallout posed «no immediate danger for (human) health» (*tadachini kenkō ni eikyō o oyobasu ryō dewa arimasen*), as if the delayed harm to human beings typical of nuclear radiation were not equally concerning. No particularly strong conclusion could, of course, be drawn from this, if cracks in proper communication were merely a feature of the first, confusing, days. But time and again over the following months, the public was exposed to contradictions and ambiguities, and telling euphemisms, which added to the sense of confusion and uncertainty, and to the populace's fear and anxiety.

Together with communiqués on TV channels and press conferences, TEPCO responds to the public demand for information by regularly updating – and adjusting – its website. Ironically, among the webpages suspended until further notice (*kurashi to sorushon*, 'life solutions', and *saiyō jōhō* 'employment opportunities'), is the page labelled '*manabu/shiru/tanoshimu*' (learning, knowing, enjoying). To this day in December 2012 the page has not been reinstated (although it carries an apology note for the inconvenience and concern [*gomeiwaku to goshinpai*] caused to society following the accident) clearly betraying the uncertain status of what could be learned, known, or enjoyed when something goes wrong.

The site starts by accumulating multimedial information, including PDF file archives, press conference videos, minute illustrations of the current site set-up, functional descriptions of pieces of equipment, real-time reports of single operations, and a live camera on the four reactors. The press releases are dry, concise and purportedly fact-based (disputable as the facts may be), but within a few weeks, conceivably in order to deflect accusations of cynicism and self-interest, the website begins to include interactional texts such as apologies or condolences. On its homepage, and extensively elsewhere, TEPCO announces *wakariyasui setsumei* (comprehensible explanations), a reminder of the schism between those who know and those who do not, and, as the most cynical view would have it, a convenient pretext for bending notions of transparency. However, the exceptional amount of information suddenly reverberating out of a TEPCO under increasing pressure actually served to throw up a kind of smoke screen, and, important as it all was, still failed to convince the public – or the media and some monitoring agencies – that such accounts were either reliable or relevant. For example, an article on 18 October in the *Mainichi Shinbun* reporting on the roadmap unveiled by the government and TEPCO in order to contain the crippled reactors at the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear Power Plant called that roadmap unconvincing, as «the criteria used to thrash out the work schedule are *vague and ambiguous*», and «*failed to show any direction* on the timing of lifting of evacuation advisories [author's italics]». Moreover, the paper notes that self-assured assessments by TEPCO officials («*there is no problem* because the melted fuel is sufficiently cooled down by water injection from above» [italics by the Author]) once again were contradicted by Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency (NISA) officials, who more cautiously stated «we will discuss [the roadmap's] validity from now on». Anti-nuclear scientists pointed out that rigorous assessments of these claims were impossible, because TEPCO simply did not release raw data.

Some social scientists contend that «against the common view that risk perception is largely an artifact of media attention or relatively uninformed or emotional public reactions, the social science literature consistently shows that knowledge – such as scientific information or industry information – has no consistent effect on risk perceptions» (Parkins, Haluza-DeLay 2011, p. 6), which is instead a function of the interplay of psychological, social, historical, political and cultural factors. They also maintain that «perhaps even more importantly, social trust is consistently observed to be influential. […] Where citizens judge the regulators and actors involved in nuclear power to be trustworthy, risk perception is likely to be lower. Conversely, where trusting relationships have been compromised, either by a history of regulatory failure, a sketchy industrial track record or by other challenges to trustworthiness, then the public is likely to judge nuclear power to be a more risky endeavor» (Parkins, Haluza-DeLay 2011, p. 7). This seems to be precisely the stage we are observing Japan to be in; the institutional response to the Fukushima incident has irrevocably eroded the trustworthiness of the Japanese government and energy regulators, and with it the hegemonic authority of the whole discourse of safety, cleanness and economy. Koide Hiroaki, a prominent anti-nuclear engineer, titles his June 2011 book *Genpatsu no uso* (The nuclear lie[s]).

3 Discourse in the Anti-nuclear Camp

How does all this compare with the discourse of anti-nuclear institutions? How do antagonist movements conceptualise nuclear power, how do they speak to their audiences, what narratives do they invoke? Let's start with a long-established anti-nuclear organisation, the Citizens' Nuclear Information Centre (CNIC, `http://www.cnic.jp/`).

The CNIC is an anti-nuclear public interest organisation born in Tokyo in 1975, and certified as a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) in 1999. The centre gathers information from both government and industry publications but also mass media and the Internet, and disseminates this information through newsletters in Japanese (fee-based) and in English (free and available online, cf. Fig. 6).

NUKE INFO TOKYO
Sep./Oct. 2011
No. 144
Citizens' Nuclear Information Center

The rally, organized by the Executive Committee for 10 Million People's Action to say Goodbye to Nuclear Power Plants, was a very successful and epoch-making event with 60,000 people from all over Japan taking part at the Meiji Park, Tokyo. Sendagaya station, near the park, and the access ways to the park were also filled with people going to take part in the rally. This is the first time the anti-nuclear movement has been able to gather such large numbers of people at one time. Thinking about the past, when we had a gathering two years after the Chernobyl accident, in 1988, it was attended by 20,000 people. That was biggest gathering at the time, but we have now been able to change the situation.

The opening remark was made by Kenzaburo Oe, a Nobel Prize winner. He said we Japanese are as yet unsafe and we must convince people in the nuclear industry that another nuclear accident is possible by making our voices heard at today's demonstration.

Women and men, younger and elder must become united in their mind and shout with one voice "No Nukes!" The people who participated in this event must have had full confidence that they could change Japan's nuclear policy and bring about a nuclear power phase-out in this country. The Executive Committee is also calling for 10 million signatures by next March.

Rallies were also held in many other locations, such as Nagasaki City, Sapporo City, Nagoya City, Osaka City, Kyoto City, and so on.

Hideyuki Ban (CNIC Co-Director)

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Figure 6. CNIC's bimonthly newsletter *Nuke info Tokyo*, September-October 2011 issue

The discourse of an NPO must cater not only to the needs of those among its constituents who already have a clear anti-nuclear ideological stance, but also of those who have yet to be convinced. This requires a particular effort not only to get access to the means of mass communication, but also to achieve 'credibility' in the face of the decades of hegemony of pro-nuclear discourse, and to overcome the constant threat of marginalisation (Allan 1989). As we noted before, where the dominant discourse has been that of positivist 'science', a humanistic discourse attributing primacy to human needs, subjective experience, moral and ethical issues is not necessarily effective. Where the socially acceptable discourse is that of rationality, emotionality can become a liability. While rejecting a purely 'scientific', rationalist, efficiency-driven logic, institutions like the CNIC have to strike a balance. They must alternate sharp scientific analyses and commentaries with the more intimate, personal histories of common citizens. Interestingly, the CNIC too construes its activities as the provision of public education, which turns the dominant discourse on its head and claims authority over information.

Scientific analyses (often authored by former pro-nuclear scientists) frequently challenge the very frames regulating nuclear discourse, and the subtle semantic exercises that seamlessly maintain it. For example, in the July-August 2011 issue, the cover piece titled: *TEPCO will do anything to maintain the 'unforeseeable' theory* argues (based on an alternative reading of technical data released by TEPCO) that TEPCO's entire communication strategy is oriented to covering up damage possibly caused by the earthquake – a rather foreseeable event in Japan – by attributing it to the exceptional and 'unforeseeable' tsunami that followed, conscious that the possibility of 'foreseeableness' would shake «the very foundations of the safety of nuclear power in 'earthquake country Japan'» («Nuke Info Tokyo» 2011, p. 1).

The same 143 issue juxtaposes this piece with an article on Ogasawara Atsuko, the owner of several plots of land near the town of Ōma (northern Honshū) on the very spot where a nuclear power plant is under construction, and the last resident still determined to oppose it. Atsuko is presented as bright and cheerful but «often filled with emotions and moved to tears when talking in public», a common individual, segregated by the construction plans and reduced to a lonely struggle. Pieces like this, along with many others on the website describing the daily experiences of ordinary citizens, together with video-accounts of families of evacuees, and updates on the workers at the damaged plants not only provide an anchoring point for the wider population to relate to the nuclear debate, but also demonstrate the struggle over the discursive construction of 'nuclear power', and challenge it by construing it not only as a scientific issue but as one with vast human implications. In fact, it is these accounts, feeding the debate themes related to personal experiences, which are important to the construction of alternative 'packages' such as the costliness, at an individual level, of the nuclear choice, juxtaposed with the 'package' of global cost-effectiveness that drives the pro-nuclear discourse.

Atsuko's case also highlights another important issue, which I will return to later: the unequal distribution of the power to communicate (Allan 1989; Van Dijk 1995, p. 12). Atsuko's plot is accessible only via a one-kilometre-long pathway, unpaved and fenced on both sides by the nuclear company, and her log-house is not visible to the neighbours. Atsuko's anti-nuclear action consists in requesting supporters to make her visible, by writing her postcards and forcing a postman to walk along the path to her home.

Like the language of CNIC's newsletter, the language used by anti-nuclear activists and demonstrators has often deployed terminology with powerful emotional resonance. The term *hibakusha* was reportedly used at public rallies, and by the chair of the Hiroshima Prefecture Atomic Bomb

Victims' Organization (広島県原爆被害者団体協議会 Hiroshima-ken genbaku higaisha dantai kyōgikai) Tsuboi Hirao (reader's letter to *The Asahi Shinbun* 27 August 2011). The latter provocatively stated that the Fukushima *hibakusha* (被曝者, victims of radiation exposure) were just the same as the Hiroshima and Nagasaki *hibakusha* (被爆者, victims of atomic bombs). Such play on the homophone, in the context of the successful narrative that disassociated military and civil uses of the atom, and of the long-term struggle over a political, rather than physical, definition of the term (Hook 1987, p. 39), is clearly subversive. The term, predictably, never appeared in TEPCO's announcements, which opted for far less iconic designations, such as *hisai sareta minasama* (被災された皆様 disaster-struck populace), *higaisha* (被害者 sufferers, victims) or the even more circumlocutory *hinan sarete iru katagata* (避難されている方々 evacuees). Likewise, novelist Murakami Haruki's use of the term *kaku no* (核の) to refer to *genshiryoku* (nuclear power) in his prize acceptance speech in Barcelona on 9 June 2011 was noted by a *Japan Times'* correspondent (*Murakami Puts a Bomb under His Compatriots' Atomic Complacency*, Pulvers 2011) for its deliberate evocation of war-time lingo.

What struck observers both inside and outside Japan in the months following the disaster was the increased dynamism of civil society and the increased visibility of social actors far more critical of the establishment's line than commonly granted by the mainstream Japanese political scene. I argue that the increasingly anti-nuclear stance of these movements (for it would be questionable to call it 'a' movement) was at least reinforced by social media and Internet resources such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, social blogging websites such as Tumblr, etc. These new channels offered anti-nuclear voices an opportunity to overcome the deafening media silence on the grassroots anti-nuclear discourse. I will return to these in section 5, after a brief foray into the media discourse.

4 The Media

A review of the media coverage provided by four major national newspapers and a regional newspaper between March and November 2011 (Satō 2012, p. 37) records the total number of words devoted to the demonstrations in Tokyo as follows: *Mainichi*: 12,066; *Tokyo Shinbun*: 11,955; *Asahi*: 4,517; *Yomiuri* 686; *Nikkei* 670. Tellingly, *Mainichi* and *Asahi* devoted more space to the March demonstration in Germany than the one in Tokyo. Of course, it is not the case that the traditional news media only showcased pro-nuclear discourse. However, they were far from providing a fair or neutral playing field. Gamson and Modigliani describe similar circumstances when they note that «in some cases, official assumptions are taken for granted [by media], but even when they are challenged by sponsors of alternative packages [i.e. anti-nuclear supporters], it is these competitors that bear the burden of proof. A weaker form of this argument is that journalists make official packages the starting point for discussing an issue» (1989, p. 7).

News media appeared keen to exercise censorship, for example, by blatantly ignoring the new movements and their messages; by listing anti-nuclear NGO organisations such as the CNIC only as a contact for tracking down missing persons, and refraining from reporting their activities (it took the *Yomiuri Shinbun* two months to feature the CNIC in a 'hard news' piece on a panel discussion); by providing, as noted above, remarkably poor coverage of protest demonstrations which international observers have found, on the contrary, to be very newsworthy; by skipping uncomfortable details about the role of the police at such demonstrations; or simply by failing to exercise criticism and to press interviewees to answer hard questions. This selection of 'worthy' topics and the devoicing of non-institutional (non-legitimised) sources in turn construe the events as insignificant and the audience as uninterested in positions outside those of the dominant discourse.

The *Yomiuri Shinbun* offered another example of this subtle conformism in an editorial of 29 September 2011 in which it first reported the results of a survey by the Japan Atomic Energy Commission – presumably a body with no revolutionary agenda – showing that 98% of the responses called for the abolishment of nuclear power plants, but then concluding, with no additional comment, that this figure could not reflect public opinion. The editorial then juxtaposes this with the paper's own surveys, showing the decline of support for the abolition of nuclear plants from 65% in July to 56% in September, and concludes that «there is much confusion regarding public opinion». Besides the questionable method involved in presenting statistics in this fashion (with no indication of the sampling method, the exact questions, etc.) and the deceiving oversimplification of responses, likely to be complex outcomes of possibly ambivalent stances (Gamson, Modigliani 1989, p. 35), it is unclear how such unqualified statements may dispel such confusion.

In an article purportedly aimed at producing a self-assessment of the paper's performance in the seven months since the incident, on 15 October 2011 *The Asahi Shinbun* publishes an interview with Shiseido honorary Chair Fukuhara Yoshiharu, presented as a qualified authority for his being a 'long-term fan' of the paper, having also served on the paper's editorial monitoring commission (*Asahi Shinbun* shimen shingikai iin) until March 2011. The article is a good example of the tame and inconclusive argumentation style (and 'critiques') of Japanese media, consistent as they are with a dominant rhetorical strategy[11] of balanced consideration of all parties' positions. On one hand, Fukuhara appears to criticise the paper for not offering a more complex picture of the effects of the earthquake on wider segments of the population: those whose work was affected perhaps to a lesser degree by debris which was not being cleared, or having to work in appalling conditions, but then concludes by wondering philosophically about the paper's right to judge: how can one assess whether the impact on individual lives was permanent or just transitory? A paper's mission is indeed to aid the reconstruction, but – he counters – after all some resent being perpetually represented as victims. With regards to the accusation of running only pieces based on the government or TEPCO's communiqués, which recalled war-time reports by the Imperial General Headquarters, Fukuhara acknowledges that the public may have felt betrayed by TEPCO's censorship of the meltdown but then defends the paper's predicament: if data were not available otherwise, what could you do? Finally, with regards to the view that, in spite of its commitment to showcase pro and anti-nuclear voices, the paper was excessively timid in its analyses and forecasts, Fukuhara candidly states that it was impossible to find a trustworthy (*shinrai dekiru*) scientist to speak on the matter, that the extreme slogans of the nuclear supporters' «it's all fine» or the anti-nuclear supporters «it's dangerous» are problematic, and the paper has a duty to show a broader variety of voices – a statement with which few could disagree, but was hardly demonstrated in the paper's line, as shown by the figures quoted at the beginning of this section on public rallies in the capital. It was here that the biggest variety of voices became audible, including intellectuals, artists, scientists, political activists and ordinary citizens from all walks of life.

The constraints on journalistic freedom that the Japanese press agency system, with the unavoidable partisanship that the dedicated press rooms entail, has been long criticised. Not only the traditional news media do play a crucial role in determining which events are newsworthy; the close proximity of journalists and institutional sources also hinders fairness of access, and simply reproduces the same hierarchies of social voices. To reclaim such a voice, the philosopher Karatani Kōjin (who, having lost trust in the Japanese press, notably chose to speak at the Foreign Press Club, 29th September 2011) urged his fellow citizens to become a society «which can demonstrate»,[12] putting his finger on the crucial and rather broad issues of a culture of engagement, scrutiny of the authorities, and human rights in Japanese society.

11 Cf. Pizziconi 2009 on the cooperative (as opposed to competitive) frame that appears to regulate ethnographic interview discussions in Japanese.

12 See the video of the demonstration on `http://peacemedia.jp/topics/110911speach.html`.

5 New Voices and New Themes: the Internet and Social Media

Stating that media discourse produced a unanimous voice is, of course, an unacceptable oversimplification, but the wide availability of Internet and mobile phones (which far exceeds that in Europe) now ensures that the bottleneck effect of official news media can be bypassed, making top-down control of news and knowledge increasingly difficult. Anti-nuclear scientists (and other social commentators) like Koide Hiroaki have published material on the nuclear issue for decades, but their public appearances can now achieve a wider and almost limitless circulation by simply uploading a YouTube clip to a blog. Twitter or Facebook were instrumental (where electricity and Internet connections were still available) in providing minute-by-minute updates of missing people's whereabouts, latest transport news, etc. but also in mobilising protest, generating new alliances, and eventually boosting the circulation of less time-bound themes, as we will see below. This digital communication enables communities of interest to emerge independently from other forms of association (geographical, professional, etc.) which rely on more conventional channels of communication (face-to-face encounters, professional literature, etc.), give access to different actors, and can, in a bottom-up fashion, challenge the dominant narrative.

Not all agree however on their transformative potential: Karatani Kōjin, commenting on the role of Twitter in mobilising participation,[13] disregards it as a merely virtual experience that can be, for that reason, easily dismissed by authorities, one that has little in common with the real, shared experience of a public demonstration. Twitter communication is quantitatively poor, being limited to 140 characters. Knowledge formation requires more than sound bites; it requires scope as well as depth, which is why the traditional news media still have an important role to play. However, to the extent that new technologies overcome some of the constraints posed by the traditional power relations, they are potentially subversive and more democratic. Networking through Twitter, blogs, Facebook – and the boundless reproduction and circulation of information that these allow – provides a lifeline to grassroots movements and a previously unthinkable visibility.

For example, a group of citizens based in Kōenji, Tokyo, known as Amateur protest (*Shirōto no ran*) was credited with organising the main demonstration in Tokyo on 6 June 2011,[14] allegedly attended by 15,000-20,000 protesters. The spirit of the group can be evinced by the profusion of graphic material posted for circulation on their website, much of which plays on the theme of utter distrust for official institutions (cf. Fig. 7). The language is

13 «Karatani Kōjin, Amamiya Karin» 2011, available at http://www.cyzo.com/2011/10/post_8675.html.

14 *6.11 Shinjuku*, http://611shinjuku.tumblr.com/; Tan 2011-2012.

plain, and 'emotional' (cf. the evaluative adjectives *abuneee!* [dangerous!] *osoroshii!* [dreadful!]), and their visual strategies, exceptional for not drawing on the usual trope of cuteness, have an all the more dramatic effect.

Figure 7. Posters graphics from *Shirōto no ran* website

The theme of distrust recurs endlessly in the discourse of anti-nuclear movements, as does the open accusation against the establishment for the spreading of *uso* (lies) or *shinwa* (myths).

Figure 8. «Safe? Green? We won't be fooled again» (from *Shirōto no ran* website)

This distrust, far from being an irrational and groundless emotional response, is fuelled by a claim to the legitimacy of concern for human values – a concern neglected by scientific discourse. Returning for a moment to the studies in risk theory, these show that while indeed lay and expert assessments of risks (including those posed by nuclear power) generally differ, contrary to common belief, lay assessments are equally consistent and rational, and in fact more 'textured' than those of the experts. Parkins and Haluza-DeLay note that «whereas technical experts base their judgements on probabilities of harm or estimates of annual fatalities, lay people base their judgements on a sense that the risks threaten things they value, such as future generations, stability, or the capacity to control technology» (2011, p. 5). Crucially, if the notion of risk involves an assessment of human values,[15] a science that ignores the human values at the core of these judgements is seriously misguided. The Fukushima disaster catalysed experiences that affected people's lives and to which people were able to relate in an unmediated way: the mass evacuations, the danger of food contamination, the dilemma of parents about how to protect their children[16] in the face of the invisible nuclear threat. This all made public opinion less reliant on media or corporate discourses, evidenced by the circulation of alternative metaphors on the nuclear such as the '*toire no nai manshion*' (a building whose waste products cannot be disposed of),[17] and various other war-time images, countering the old disassociation of military and civil uses of the nuclear. Murakami Haruki, for example, speaking at a public rally, condemned his country's failure to say no to nuclear in 1945, when Japan experienced the «scars» left by radiation «on the world and human well-being» («Novelist Murakami» 2011). Quite explicitly he attacked the government and utility companies for prioritising «efficiency» and «convenience», which marginalised opponents as «unrealistic dreamers», and he reclaimed human beings' «right to dream».

15 They quote a definition by Rohrmann and Renn (2000), where risk is «understood as the possibility that human actions, situations or events might lead to consequences that affect aspects of what humans value» (Parkins, Haluza-DeLay 2011, p. 14).

16 The *Mainichi Shinbun* of 16 October 2011 carried an interview with novelist Kanehara Hitomi, in which she admitted having fled Tokyo and moved to Okayama the day after the disaster, and spoke of parents' distress for being caught between an expectation of loyalty to their communities and the wish to protect their children (cf. Kanehara 2011, available at http://ratio.sakura.ne.jp/archives/2011/10/17214029/).

17 Nobuo Ikeda (2012) and see a blogger's environmentalist (and patriotic) reflection on the meaning of the metaphor: (s)he suggests that nuclear plants are like a foreign building which cannot withstand the tremors of Japanese earthquakes. The nuclear *manshion* does not suit Japan and its earthquakes, so «let's enjoy old-fashioned relaxing Japanese wooden homes, and chill out with a fan in your hand that is suitable to our climate. The story of three little pigs does not suit the Japanese» («Toire no nai manshon» 2011, http://ameblo.jp/aonoshinbrain2/entry-10954063171.html).

The climate of uncertainty and huge anxiety that the country had to endure could not leave the children unaffected. How could Japan explain the terrifying prospective scenarios to its children, inevitably exposed to the relentless drumming of bulletins on the crippled reactor? Once again a reaction came through digital media. The artist Hachiya Kazuhiko (known for his works marrying art and science) began to issue a number of tweets, later collected and edited in a short anime which appeared on YouTube less than a week after the incident, explaining the still unfolding events through the light-hearted humour of a scatological metaphor. The power plant is once again personified by cute character Genpatsu-kun.

Figure 9. Genpatsu-kun has a stomachache

Following the incident, Genpatsu-kun has developed a stomachache, and now needs to relieve himself. His poo is very smelly, and if it leaked everyone would be in trouble! An explosion is heard, but no worries, it was just a little wind. Doctors (the rescue teams at the plant) keep on giving him medicine: a bit more wind is coming out but this smell soon disappears so people who live far away «won't even notice». Palliative as the video's intent may be, it is difficult not to spot the limits of the metaphor. Some worry that the smell might remain forever, but this is not true: «it will go in one week». The narrative even includes some reference to the fact that doctors treating Genpatsu-kun's dangerous poo are actually at risk (*inochi ga abunakunaru*), that nobody knows how to dispose of that poo, and that disposal is very costly, but all these messages are packaged in a constellation of reassuring semiotic signs: apart from the sedate anthropomorphism of the anime, there is an up-tempo soundtrack, 'cute' characters, the intermixing of plain-style utterances and modal particles, which characterise down-to-earth, informal speech.

Anime are a quite common pedagogical tool in Japanese visual culture, and certainly do not exclusively target young children. The need to assuage children's anguish undoubtedly justifies the patent fallaciousness of some statements, but the package does bring to mind the corporate pro-nuclear videos, as the considerate sanitisation of the message eventually excuses the plant, which has «given us a lot of electricity until now». That reassuring manga-like characters were exploited against the angst of the time is perhaps not surprising.

In spite of the dismissive comments by many observers about the role of Twitter in the formation of a new public consciousness, and the virtual volatility of public opinion channelled through it, it is notable that this channel generated a somewhat more persistent phenomenon, such as the character Monju-kun. Monju is the name of a fast breeder reactor in Fukui Prefecture famous for a plethora of accidents, which have seen it produce electricity for a single hour since the beginning of tests in 1986. Monju-kun presents himself as a reformed nuclear worker: after the Fukushima incident, he became aware of his own riskiness and deceit, and he now wants «to quit working». This fictional character now writes books, gives interviews, and even has his very own idiolect – the cute «*desudayo*».

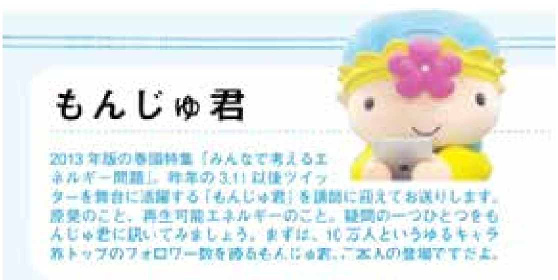

Figure 10. Monju-kun on the pages of *Gendai yōgo no kiso chishiki 2013 special edition*

In the special issue of *Gendai yōgo no kiso chishiki 2013* (現代用語の基礎知識2013号外版) Monju-kun presents his 'educational' objectives. He argues that speaking on Twitter was necessary in order to spread «information» that could become «food for thought», because people were afraid, but also afraid to admit they were afraid, and needed to start talking about it. Monju-kun draws his 'knowledge' from publicly available sources such as the *Fukui Shinbun* (福井新聞), *Kahoku Shinpō* (河北新報) or others, but 'he' makes an effort to explain them simply for the general public. He distrusts institutional media, and recommends an exercise: comparing various newspapers (*Mainichi*, *Asahi*, *Yomiuri*, *Tokyo Shinbun*) to spot the bias inherent in every account. He admits that one cannot change the world by tweeting in 140 characters, but because he wants to offer his simple and positive vision to grown-ups and children alike, he has now released three publications, with graphs and illustrations.

Monju-kun clearly apes his predecessor Pluto-kun (of the pro-nuclear campaign), and, like Pluto-kun, features reassuring, familiarly cute looks, but the subversive nature of this 'cute' reference in the context of the disaster did not go unnoticed,[18] and far from just mollifying the message, sarcastically challenged the narrative of unlimited progress.

The magnitude of the catastrophe and the articulate multiplicity of discourses, metaphors, and imagery that have been mobilised in response to it, and that I have described in the sections above have stirred up, and no doubt will continue to stir up very big questions about the values that Japanese society will pursue in the future. In my closing remarks, I offer a brief reflection on this.

6 Japanese Culture and Concluding Remarks

On 5 July 2012 a parliamentary report[19] by the Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Committee's was submitted to both houses of the Japanese Diet. The executive summary by chairman Kurokawa Kiyoshi opened with the statement that «the […] accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant cannot be regarded as a natural disaster. It was a profoundly man-made disaster – that could and should have been foreseen and prevented». More critically however, it goes on to qualify the nature of this human responsibility with the following statement, **not** included in the Japanese version:

> For all the extensive detail it provides, what this report cannot fully convey – especially to a global audience – is the mindset that supported the negligence behind this disaster.
> What must be admitted – very painfully – is that this was a disaster 'Made in Japan'. Its fundamental causes are to be found *in the ingrained conventions of Japanese culture: our reflexive obedience; our reluctance to question authority; our devotion to 'sticking with the program'; our groupism; and our insularity*.
> Had other *Japanese* been in the shoes of those who bear responsibility for this accident, the result may well have been the same [italics by the Author].

While the Japanese version made reference to «50 years of one-party rule, mass employment for new graduates, the seniority system, life-time employ-

18 Cf. Hirabayashi 2012 on the appearance of Monju-kun's mascot at a demonstration in Harajuku, Tokyo.

19 Downloadable at `http://warp.da.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/3856371/naiic.go.jp/en/index.html`. Some extracts are available from the *BBC Post* «Fukushima Report» 2012.

ment» (*ittōshihai to, shinsotsu ikkatsu saiyō, nenkōjoretsu, shūshinkoyō*) and a Japanese «mindset» which «took all of that for granted», the English version, arguably striving to contextualise the accident for the global audience, refers, surprisingly candidly, if not brutally, to the collective conceit of a powerful financial elite and bureaucracy, and the lack of public accountability, the prioritisation of organisational interest at the expense of public interest, and a cover-up culture. But the reference to the «cultural causes» of the catastrophe (as well as the explicit declaration that the report did not seek to «lay blame», but to «learn from the disaster») literally enraged the protesters. Among these, Nobel Prize winner Ōe Kenzaburō called the report's reference to the Japanese culture a «cop-out» (cf. Kageyama 2012) that left individual responsibility unquestioned.

Lack of public scrutiny and accountability, a cosy relationship between government agencies and nuclear industry, lax regulation that does not put citizens' interests first, are not unique features of the Japanese system. But the discourses that support pro- or anti-nuclear stances and policies are nevertheless liable to broader cultural conventions, including notions of deference or challenge to power, the importance of and the modalities of consensus-building, the scope of acceptable topics of conversation, and so on. Social media and other forms of bottom-up communication (the production and circulation of information) have a huge subversive potential, but this potential is subordinated to citizens' willingness to become more engaged, to openly challenge the dominant discourse, and reshape the terms of the debate. Culture, including energy culture and life-style, is not created directly by institutions, but indirectly by discourses. This is because images, texts, information and their sources do not carry meaning independently, but are interpreted against the backdrop of the ideological stances assumed by viewers, which are in an interdependent relationship with the social context, affecting it (as public opinion) and being affected by it (through, for example, exposure to media discourses, active political engagement, etc.). It is because of this that images of demonstrators may be received as merely fatalist, touchy-feely attacks on the rigour of scientific discourse, or as a legitimate demand for human rights and mass empowerment. Japan's future policies will be profoundly affected by the nature of the discourse on the nuclear that ordinary Japanese citizens will be able to create and sustain, or their ability to marshal different values against those of the industry. The crucial buzz-words of **safe** or **green** have begun to take on bitter sarcastic nuances provoking their disassociation from the interpretive packages of the pro-nuclear discourse. Others, like *hibaku*, evoke associations with a past that Japan had hoped to forget.

What we have witnessed since March 2011 is a battle for the power over knowledge and information, a re-conquering, by ordinary citizens, of the semiotic fields surrounding the nuclear. Whether this new discursive context – the new voices emerging in the wake of the disaster through the levelling networks of digital communication, the new narratives on human experience, human rights, public accountability, distrust in the authority – will lead to more enduring predispositions and a demise of the belief in the inevitability of nuclear power for social progress, only time will tell. Spontaneous, small-scale, often non-ideological grassroots movements have existed throughout Japanese post-war history, but have often had only a local resonance. The magnitude of the Fukushima disaster gave the themes of these movements a national – and global – relevance, and its critical, alternative narratives a more powerful significance. The psychological conflict between multiple narratives never has predictable outcomes: a general support for the discourse of progress and development may conflict with local concerns about cleanness and safety, and generate the ambivalent stance called 'not-in-my-back-yard'. But a discursive field with the potential for restructuring a political space tainted with corruption, corporate interests and an utter disregard for human experience has been created in the wake of the Fukushima disaster, and this, at least, can only be a positive step forward for Japan's democracy.

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Earthquakes and Language
Words and Expressions that Resulted from the Tōhoku Earthquake

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Abstract A focus on new Japanese words that came about after the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, and the subsequent Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster is here provided. The first half concentrates on onomatopoeia that resulted from the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake, whose data will be compared to those from the 1995 Great Hanshin earthquake: the kind of onomatopoeia produced reflects the unique characteristics of each earthquake. The second half deals with new words that were produced as a result of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, and tracks the process of these words becoming fixed in the Japanese language. In conclusion, it is possible to predict that Japanese dictionaries will have to either add the new words or change the existing definitions of words as a result of the disaster.

Summary 1. Onomatopoeia that Resulted from the Earthquake. – 2. Words that Resulted from the Nuclear Disaster. – 2.1. 除染 (*josen*, decontamination). – 2.2. 廃炉 (*hairo*, decommissioned nuclear plant). – 2.3. 炉心溶融 (*roshinyōyū*, meltdown) and メルトダウン (*merutodaun*, meltdown).

The Japanese language has an abundance of vocabulary terms with new words constantly being created, in addition to a plethora of foreign loanwords. For people studying Japanese, however, this creates an obstacle to acquiring the language. As a result of the 2011 nuclear disaster, even more new words have entered the Japanese language. This includes many unpleasant words that would not have been known had there not been an accident. Therefore, one could say that the disaster has brought about a terrible tragedy in the Japanese language, as well.

The focus of this paper is on new Japanese words that came about at the time of the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami, and the subsequent Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. The first half of the paper will concentrate on onomatopoeia that resulted from the Tōhoku earthquake. In this section, data from the 1995 Great Hanshin earthquake and 2011 Tōhoku earthquake are compared. The second half of the paper will deal with new words that were produced as a result of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. It will also track the process of these words becoming fixed in the Japanese language over time through examining how they are treated in some of Japan's most widely circulated newspapers.

1 Onomatopoeia that Resulted from the Earthquake

In this first section, I will use a survey from the time of the 1995 Great Hanshin earthquake, along with data that I collected from newspapers after the Tōhoku earthquake. I will then compare data on earthquake-related onomatopoeia. The following newspapers were used to collect the data:

- *The Asahi Shinbun*, 12 March 2011-30 June 2011 (shortened to *Asahi*);
- *Asahi DNA* (Digital News Archive), 12 March 2011-30 June 2011 (*Asahi*);
- *Mainichi Shinbun*, 12 March 2011-30 June 2011 (*Mainichi*);
- *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 12 March 2011-30 June 2011 (*Yomiuri*);
- *Yomidasu* (electronic database), 12 March 2011-30 June 2011 (*Yomiuri*).

To begin, here are onomatopoeic words that were used to express the sound of the earthquake occurring. Examples of sounds recorded during the Hanshin earthquake were:

- ゴーッ (*go—*);
- ズズズ (*zuzuzu*);
- ドドド (*dododo*);
- ドーン (*dōn*);
- ドドン (*dodon*);
- ドスン (*dosun*);
- ドドドドドッ (*dodododo*).

In the Tōhoku data, there were no examples of *zuzuzu* or *dosun*, rather there were many onomatopoeic words with the sound '*go*'.

[1] 「ゴー」という地鳴りが聞こえた。
«Go—» to iu jinari ga kikoeta.
I heard the ground rumble.
(*Mainichi*, 13 April, p. 39, Fukushima)

[2] 「ゴー」という咆哮するような音が、全ての音を掻き消している。
«Go—» to iu hōkō suru yō na oto ga, subete no oto o kakikeshite iru.
A loud noise, like a roar, drowned out all other sounds.
(*Mainichi*, Sunday edition, p. 40, Kamaishi-shi)

In the Hanshin data, the '*go*' sound was also used to express the sound of the tremors, however the expression 'roar' (*hōkō suru*) was not used. The word 'roar' suggests something fierce and animalistic, and also expresses a sense of fear, as well as the enormity of the situation.

[3] ゴゴゴゴゴ…。聞いたこともないような重低音。
Gogogogogo… Kiita koto mo nai yō na jūteion.

It was a low-frequency sound like I had never heard before.
(*Mainichi*, 15 April, p. 39)

As shown in the three examples above, there are many expressions that use the '*go*' sound repeatedly, some that use the sound up to 6 times: *gogogogogo* (*Asahi*, evening, 24 March) and *gogogogogogo*— (*Asahi*, evening, 24 March). The *Nihongo onomatope jiten* (Shōgakukan, 2007) is currently the largest onomatopoeia dictionary with approximately 4500 entries, but as of yet, there is not an entry that uses the '*go*' sound repeatedly.

Next, I will examine onomatopoeic words that express a shaking motion. In the Hanshin data, the following words were used:

- グラッ (*gura*);
- グラグラ (*guragura*);
- ガタガタ (*gatagata*);
- ミシミシ (*mishimishi*);
- ワシャワシャ (*washawasha*);
- ユッサユッサ (*yussayussa*).

In the Tōhoku data these three words plus example sentences example 4-6 were recorded:

- ガガガ (*gagaga*);
- ガタガタ (*gatagata*);
- ドドドッ (*dododo*).

[4] 「ぎいー、ぎいー」と家がきしむ音が続いて、
«Gii—, gii—» to ie ga kishimu oto ga tsuzuite,
The house continued to make creaking sounds,
(*Asahigu*, p. 24)

[5] ギシギシと音を立てて揺れる家の中で、
Gishigishi to oto o tatete yureru ie no naka de,
[I was] inside the house, which made a noise as it swayed,
(*Yomiuri*, 24 April, p. 36)

[6] ぐらーん、ぐらーん。立っていられないほど大きな横揺れに、
Gurān, gurān. Tatte irarenai hodo ōkina yokoyure ni,
Then the shaking grew so intense, you couldn't keep standing,
(*Asahi*, 23 March, p. 12)

The Hanshin earthquake produced many onomatopoeic words with the sound '*gura*' or '*guragura*', but there was no example of '*gurāngurān*'. The sound suggests a big, slow swaying motion, which reveals one of the characteristics of the Tōhoku earthquake itself. Many people reported that the tremors lasted a long time; some even said the ground shook for over two minutes.

There was no tsunami damage after the Hanshin earthquake; therefore, no tsunami-related onomatopoeic words were produced. In the case of the Tōhoku earthquake, however, the resulting tsunami caused major damage, leading to the creation of many onomatopoeic words that described the sound and force of the waves.

[7] ウネウネと波が押し寄せてきた。
Uneune to nami ga oshiyosete kita.
The waves surged up in a winding fashion.
(*Asahi*, 22 April, p. 36)

[8] バリバリと大きな音をあげて真っ黒な津波が迫ってきた。
Baribari to ōkina oto o agete makkuro na tsunami ga sematte kita.
The jet-black tsunami approached with a loud crushing noise.
(*Mainichi*, evening, 14 March, p. 9)

[9] 「ブォー」と膨れ上がって押し寄せ、
«Buō» to hareagatte oshiyose,
It swelled up and surged forward,
(*Asahi*, evening, 29 March, p. 10)

In addition to these words are onomatopoeia such as *mokomoko* (モコモコ), *zabunzabun* (ザブンザブン), and *sā* (サーッ), which have no precedents in the Hanshin data, meaning they are unique to the Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. '*Baribari*' in example 8 is a word used to express the sound of something breaking or the state of working hard, but here, it is used to describe the sound of the waves. The expression keenly captures the intensity of an enormous, harmful force quickly approaching.

So far, we have examined onomatopoeic words from the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami and compared them with ones from the 1995 Hanshin earthquake. In terms of both amount and variation, there is more to be found in the Hanshin data. In the Tōhoku data, we saw that the onomatopoeic '*go*' sound was used in various ways, but in the Hanshin data, sounds like '*do*' and '*zu*' were more common. The Hanshin data also showed an overall greater variety of sounds. Comparing onomatopoeia use after the two disasters, we find that the Hanshin disaster produced more kinds of words, but the Tōhoku disaster produced words that were more powerful sounding, though variation was limited. This concludes the section on onomatopoeia use after the two massive earthquakes.

2 Words that Resulted from the Nuclear Disaster

In the following section, I will examine how neologisms were born as a result of the nuclear disaster, and how they became fixed in the Japanese language. After the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident on 11 March, the media was overflowing with words that had never been seen nor heard before. Moreover, none of these new words appeared in normal Japanese dictionaries. For example,

- 除染 (*josen*, decontamination);
- 炉心溶融 (*roshinyōyū*, meltdown);
- 輪番停電 (*rinbanteiden*, rolling blackout);
- 廃炉 (*hairo*, decommissioning);
- 被曝線量 (*hibakusenryō*, radiation exposure);
- 汚染水 (*osensui*, contaminated water);
- 水管 (*suikan*, water tomb);
- 卒原発 (*sotsugenpatsu*, 'graduating' from nuclear power);
- メルトダウン (*merutodaun*, meltdown);
- シルトフェンス (*shirutofensu*, silt fence);
- ベント (*bento*, vent);
- トレンチ (*torenchi*, trench);
- ホットスポット (*hottosupotto*, radiation hot spot).

In this section, I would like to take four of these new words and examine whether or not they were previously recorded in dictionaries, and see how the words have become fixed in the Japanese language over time.

2.1 除染 (*josen*, decontamination)

First, let us examine the recorded history of the word.

Table 1

Dictionary Year pub.	SGK[1] 2011/2	SSK[2] 2011/1	DJR[3] 2006	KJE[4] 2008	NKD[5] 2001	GYK[6] 2011
Recorded?	×	×	○	○	○	×

1. SGK = *Sanseidō gendai shinkokugo jiten*; 2. SSK = *Shinsen kokugo jiten*; 3. DJR = *Daijirin*; 4. KJE = *Kōjien*; 5. NKD = *Nihon kokugo daijiten*; 6. GYK = *Gendaiyōgo no kisochishiki*

○ = recorded, × = unrecorded

From Table 1, we see that the word was recorded in medium-size and larger dictionaries, so now let us look at previous editions to see when it was first recorded. In the first edition of *Daijirin* (1988), editions prior to the 5th edition of *Kōjien* (1998), and the 1st edition of *Nikkoku* (1972), the word was not recorded. Additionally, it was not recorded in the *Dai-*

kanwajiten (1991), which contains the largest number of words among all Chinese-Japanese dictionaries. Therefore, the first appearance of this word in a Japanese dictionary was in 1995.

Collected data samples of this word are as follows:

[1] 福島県が被曝したと発表した3人は［……］病院の患者や職員とみられる 。［……］3人とも除染しなくてはいけないという。
Fukushima-ken ga hibaku shita to happyō shita sannin wa […] byōin no kanja ya shokuin to mirareru. […] san-nin tomo josen shinakute wa ikenai to iu.
The three people Fukushima prefecture reported as being exposed to radiation were […] either patients or workers at a hospital. […] all three must undergo decontamination.
(*Asahi*, 13 March, p. 1)

[2] 放射性物質を体表面から除去する「除染」が必要と診断され
Hōshasei-busshitsu o karada hyōmen kara jokyo suru «josen» ga hitsuyō to shindan sare
«Decontamination», the act of removing radioactive substances from the surface of the body, has been deemed necessary
(*Yomiuri*, 13 March, p. 1, emphasis added)

Both of these examples were taken from the front page of 13 March newspapers. In example 2, quotation marks are used, and the meaning of *josen* is explained, as seen in the underlined section. In example 1, quotation marks are not used, nor is the word given a definition. Generally, neologisms that are unfamiliar to readers are treated as in example 2, but in example 1, the journalist or editor probably did not have the time to include it.

As seen in the following example 3, when a new word is used multiple times in the same sentence, it is common practice to use quotation marks at the first mention then remove them from the second time onwards.

[3] 測定の結果、放射能を洗い流す「除染」作業が必要とされた住民は、圏内の２，３箇所に集約して除染を行う。
Sokutei no kekka, hōshanō o arainagasu 'josen' sagyō ga hitsuyō to sareta jūmin wa, kennai no 2, 3 kasho ni shūyaku shite josen o okonau.
According to the measurement, those citizens who require 'decontamination' to wash off radiation will be gathered in two or three places within the area and decontamination will be performed.
(*Yomiuri*, 14 March, p. 20)

Words that are deemed unfamiliar to readers are given quotation marks or supplemented with explanations. Once the word is widely understood, these additions are phased out. Also, as usage increases, the word starts to be used in compound words, enabling us to view the word's growing independence from its status as a coined word.

For example, let us look at the compound word 除染作業 (*josensagyō*, decontamination operations). At first, this compound word was given quotation marks, but over time they were removed. In March and April of 2011, there was a mixture of *josensagyō* 除染作業 (*Asahi*, 17 March, p. 1) and «*josen*» *sagyō* 『除染』作業 (*Yomiuri*, 13 March, p. 1). By the middle of April, such quotation usage disappeared, and the word was used by itself. In addition, compound words like the following started to appear:

- 除染費用 (*josenhiyō*, cost of decontamination) (*Asahi*, 23 April, p. 1)
- 除染装置 (*josensochi*, decontaminant) (*Yomiuri*, 16 June, p. 1)
- 除染実験 (*josenjikken*, decontamination experiment) (*Asahi*, 20 June, p. 13)
- 土壌除染 (*dojōjosen*, soil decontamination) (*Yomiuri*, 28 June, p. 4)

Thus, we can say that as recognition increases, quotation marks cease to be used. There are no examples of quotation marks used in the *Yomiuri Shinbun* from 28 April onwards, or in *The Asahi Shinbun* from 13 May onwards. However, as shown in example 2, the newspapers continued to add explanations to new words, though quotations were not used. The following sentence is another example of this method:

[4] 水で洗い流す除染作業が
Mizu de arainagasu josensagyō ga
Decontamination operations, the act of washing radiation off with water
(*Yomiuri*, 1 June, p. 12, emphasis added)

As the word takes root in the language, this method becomes unnecessary, as seen in the following example:

[5] 土壌の除染をどうする方針なのか。
Dojō no josen o dō suru hōshin na no ka.
What course of action should be taken in the decontamination of soil?
(*Asahi*, 21 June, p. 36)

In example 5, neither quotations nor an explanation is added. '*Josen*' ceases to be used as a special word and is used normally from 2 June onwards in *Yomiuri* articles, and 13 May onwards in *Asahi* articles. At first, '*josen*' was used to mean, 'washing off radioactive substances on the body', but gradually also came to indicate the act of 'removing contamination from the environment', such as soil.

2.2 廃炉 (*hairo*, decommissioned nuclear plant)

First, let us examine the recorded history of *hairo* in Japanese dictionaries.

Table 2

Dictionary Year pub.	SGK[1] 2011/2	SSK[2] 2011/1	DJR3[3] 2006	KJE6[4] 2008	NKD[5] 2001	GYK[6] 2011
Recorded?	×	×	○	×	×	○

1. SGK = *Sanseidō gendai shinkokugo jiten*; 2. SSK = *Shinsen kokugo jiten*; 3. *Daijirin*, 3rd ed.; 4. *Kōjien*, 6th ed.; 5. NKD = *Nihon kokugo daijiten*; 6. GYK = *Gendaiyōgo no kisochishiki*

○ = recorded, × = unrecorded editions

As seen in Table 2, the word is only recorded in the 3rd editions of the *Daijirin* and *Gendaiyōgo* dictionaries. The word is also recorded in the 2nd edition of *Daijirin*, but not in the first. If we track the history of the word in previous editions of *Gendaiyōgo* dictionaries, we can observe several changes along the way. The first appearance of this word in a *Gendaiyōgo* dictionary was in the 1980 edition. It was entered as *hairo*.

> 廃炉 (*hairo*, decommissioned nuclear plant): a nuclear reactor that has reached the end of its lifespan. Its contents contain radioactive materials, thus it cannot be disposed of as is.

From 1986, the entry name for this word changed to *genshirohaishisochi* (原子炉廃止措置). The reason this was done was in an attempt to change the negative image of the word. In 1998, it became *hairo/genshirohaishisochi*, and in 2000 it was changed slightly to *hairo* (*genshirohaishisochi*). It changed once again in 2003, becoming *genshirokaitai* (原子炉解体). In 2011, it became *genshirokaitai* (*hairo*), with *hairo* coming back. Throughout this period, the definition of the word and its English translation never changed; only the word itself kept changing over and over.

In short, the history of this word is one of having its phrasing altered in order to avoid the term '*hairo*'. The relative importance given to certain words in the dictionary mirrors the present state of that society. Thus, through tracking the history of words, we can grasp how Japanese society felt about the policies or interests concerning nuclear reactors, depending on the time period.

Next, I would like to look at the usage of '*hairo*' from 11 March onwards.

[6] 2，3 号機を廃炉にする覚悟で早急に思い切った対応をするべきだった。
2, 3 gōki o hairo ni suru kakugo de sōkyū ni omoikitta taiō o suru beki datta.
They should have been prepared to take immediate, drastic action and decommission reactors 2 and 3.
(*Yomiuri*, 15 March, p. 7)

[7] 廃炉覚悟で踏み切った。
Hairo kakugo de fumikitta.
They began with the resolve to decommission the reactor.
(*Asahi*, 16 March, p. 13)

As seen in the two examples above, neither an explanation nor quotations are given from the beginning. Though it is not recorded in the dictionary, it is easy to infer what the word means, since we see the character for *hai* (廃) often in daily life, as in *haisha* (廃車 scrapped car), *haihin* (廃品 rubbish), *haikibutsu* (廃棄物 waste), *haian* (廃案 scrapped plan), *haigyō* (廃業 cease business), or *haishi* (廃止 abolish).

However, the meaning of the word that is being used in examples 6 and 7 is different from the meaning listed in the dictionary. In the 3rd edition of *Daijirin*, the word's meaning is provided as «a nuclear reactor that has reached the end of its lifespan». It describes a reactor that has completed its function. Yet, in these examples, the word is used to describe the act of scrapping a nuclear reactor before its lifespan has been reached: «The possibility of decommissioning [the reactor] is high» (*Yomiuri*, 29 March, p. 1), «[They] decided to decommission [the reactor]» (*Yomiuri*, 13 March, p. 3), «[They] will proceed with decommissioning [the reactor]» (*Asahi*, 14 April, p. 5). In the future, it is likely that they will have to change the dictionary entry to include this new usage.

2.3 炉心溶融 (*roshinyōyū*, meltdown) and メルトダウン (*merutodaun*, meltdown)

These two words have been recorded as follows:

Table 3

Dict. Year pub.	SGK[1] 2011/2	SSK[2] 2011/1	DJR[3] 2006	KJE[4] 2008	NKD[5] 2001	GYK[6] 2011
roshinyōyū	×	×	○	○	○	○
merutodaun	○	×	○	○	○	○

1. SGK = *Sanseidō gendai shinkokugo jiten*; 2. SSK = *Shinsen kokugo jiten*; 3. DJR = *Daijirin*; 4. KJE = *Kōjien*; 5. NKD = *Nihon kokugo daijiten*; 6. GYK = *Gendaiyōgo no kisochishiki*

○ = recorded, × = unrecorded

As Table 3 shows, '*roshinyōyū*' is listed in mid-size and larger dictionaries, but not small ones. Next, we will look at the examples of '*roshinyōyū*' I collected.

[8] 冷却水が失われて最悪の場合炉心溶融につながる。
Reikyakusui ga ushinawarete saiaku no baai roshinyōyū ni tsunagaru.
If coolant water runs out, in the worst-case scenario it could lead to a meltdown.
(*Asahi*, evening, 12 March, p. 12)

[9] 炉心溶融（メルトダウン）まで発展する可能性は高くない。
Roshinyōyū (merutodaun) made hatten suru kanōsei wa takakunai.
There is a low probability it will progress to the point of meltdown.
(*Yomiuri*, 12 March, p. 3)

In example 8, no explanation is given for '*roshinyōyū*'. In example example 9, '*merutodaun*', a loanword from English, is used as a synonym and put in parentheses, but the meaning is not explained. Like with '*josen*', there are sentences where quotations are used or the concept is defined.

[10] 原子炉内の核燃料が溶け出す「炉心溶融」も起きた可能性が指摘されている。
Genshironai no kakunenryō ga tokedasu 'roshinyōyū' mo okita kanōsei ga shiteki sarete iru.
It has been indicated that there is a possibility 'meltdown', in which nuclear fuel inside the reactor melts, has occurred.
(*Yomiuri*, 13 March, p. 3, emphasis added)

[11] 原子炉内の燃料集合体の一部が融熱で溶ける炉心溶融が進み過酷事故に発展する恐れがある。
Genshironai no nenryō shūgōtai no ichibu ga yūnetsu de tokeru roshinyōyū ga susumi kakokujiko ni hatten suru osore ga aru.
There is a potential that meltdown, where a part of the nuclear fuel assembly inside the reactor melts due to fusion heat, has occurred and it may advance to the level of severe accident.
(*Yomiuri*, 13 March, p. 1, emphasis added)

In example 10, the underlined modifier is explaining '*roshinyōyū*', which is in quotations. In sentence example 11, the underlined modifier comes before the noun, which is not given quotation marks, and explains the concept of '*roshinyōyū*'. These methods occasionally appear in the newspaper, but once the word is judged to be widely understood without the need for synonyms or definitions, quotation marks and added explanations disappear, as in the following sentence 12.

[12] 実施されたのは炉心溶融が起きた後だった。
Jisshi sareta no wa roshinyōyū ga okita ato datta.
[It] was enforced after meltdown had occurred.
(*Yomiuri*, 17 May, p. 3)

The following three example sentences will examine the use of '*meru-todaun*'.

[13] メルトダウンという最悪事態に比べれば被害はずっと小さい。
Merutodaun to iu saiaku jitai ni kurabereba higai wa zutto chiisai.
Compared to meltdown, the worst possible scenario, the damage is much smaller.
(*Asahi*, evening, 12 March, p. 5)

[14] 磯崎氏は「メルトダウン（炉心溶融）の可能性があるから早く蒸気を出さなければいけないという緊迫した状況で［……］」と指摘した。
Isozaki-shi wa «merutodaun (roshinyōyū) no kanōsei ga aru kara hayaku jōki o dasanakereba ikenai to iu kinpaku shita jōkyō de […]» to shiteki shita.
Isozaki indicated: «There was a possibility of meltdown, so we had to release steam quickly under such a tense situation…».
(*Asahi*, 30 March, p. 4)

[15] 保安院も燃料が溶けて圧力容器の底にたまる「メルトダウン」が1号機で起きた可能性が否定できないとしています。
Hoanin mo <u>nenryō ga tokete atsuryoku yōki no soko ni tamaru</u> 'merutodaun' ga 1 gōki de okita kanōsei ga hitei dekinai to shite imasu.
The Nuclear Agency has also said they cannot deny the possibility that 'meltdown', <u>when fuel melts and collects at the bottom of the pressure container</u>, has occurred in reactor 1.
(*Asahi*, 12 May, p. 1, emphasis added)

Example 13 uses the word with no explanation given, while example 14 adds the Sino-Japanese word '*roshinyōyū*' in parentheses. Example 15 puts the word in quotations and explains the meaning, showing that the word is still unfamiliar. Below, I have calculated the appearance rates of '*roshinyōyū*' and '*merutodaun*', and put the numbers into a graph.

Table 4. Appearances of *roshinyōyū* and *merutodaun*, separated by newspaper

		March	April	May	June	Total
Asahi	*roshinyōyū*	39	16	33	11	99
	merutodaun	4	5	59	12	80
Yomiuri	*roshinyōyū*	37	3	45	14	99
	merutodaun	1	2	27	7	37

As a whole, we can say *Asahi* uses '*merutodaun*' more frequently, over twice as much as *Yomiuri*. In total numbers, '*roshinyōyū*' has more appearances, but in the May and June totals for *Asahi*, '*merutodaun*' is more frequent. *Yomiuri* uses '*roshinyōyū*' more frequently every month. If we look at how these words are used, we can see that '*merutodaun*' is often used in dialogue, as in example sentences 13 and 14. There are also examples of the word being used as a metaphor.

[16] Ｇ7はＧ20を経てＧゼロへとメルトダウンしていくのが
G7 wa G20 o hete G zero e to merutodaun shite iku no ga
After the G20, the G7 is facing a meltdown towards becoming the G0
(*Yomiuri*, 28 April, p. 29)

In total, five example sentences were gathered in which '*merutodaun*' was used as a metaphor for an organisation weakening and dissolving, such as, «the government's meltdown was paraded in front of us» (*seiji no merutodaun o misetsukerareta*) (*Asahi*, 3 June, p. 38). There were no examples of '*roshinyōyū*' being used metaphorically.

The fact that '*merutodaun*' is used in conversation and also as a metaphor is proof that recognition of the word has increased, and is now easier to use in daily speech. From this trend, we can predict that the usage of this loanword will soon exceed that of the Sino-Japanese word '*roshinyōyū*'.

Generally, loanwords are associated with images like 'bright' (*akarui*), 'trendy' (*oshare*), 'light'/'unserious' (*karui*), and 'fresh' (*shinsen*). '*Roshinyōyū*', however, is a Sino-Japanese word that is difficult to understand if heard. Looking at the characters, we see that they expose the horrible reality of the situation (that is, the central part [心 *shin*] of the reactor [炉 *ro*] melts [溶融 *yōyū*]). It is natural to want to turn away from this harsh reality. Perhaps as a result, the loanword '*merutodaun*' came to be used more often in conversation or as a metaphor. Once this happens, however, awareness of the reality of the situation decreases, and the truth of what is really happening is obscured – in other words, we fall victim to the negative aspect of using loanwords.

In this section, I have examined the fixation process of words that were not recorded in most Japanese dictionaries, but came into use after the Fukushima Daiichi incident. I predict that these words will likely be recorded in future editions of the dictionaries, and their definitions will also probably be revised.

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Contemporary Japan
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Keitai shōsetsu: Mobile Phone Novels
Is It True that New Technologies Are Changing the Japanese Language?

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Abstract *Keitai shōsetsu*, or 'mobile phone novels', is a recent social and 'literary' phenomenon that started at the beginning of this century and has subsequently become widely diffused in Japan. Novels, often written by amateur authors, are distributed via mobile phones and on the Web, and read by a huge number of people. The subjects and topics of these novels, the young age of the characters depicted, as well as of the vast majority of the addressees of these stories seem to influence the diaphasic factors of the language. For its use of mobile phone technology, *keitai shōsetsu* also represents a testing ground to understand the influence of tools in the transformation of language, that is hence acquiring new communication strategies. Various aspects of the Japanese language used in *keitai shōsetsu* are described by means of different examples and by showing the influence of widespread mobile phone habits, such as use of emoticons, on 'literary' production.

Summary 1. Introduction. – 2. Mobile Phone Novels. – 3. The Sampling of *Keitai Shōsetsu*. – 4. Shortened Forms. – 5. Colloquialisms. – 6. A 'Syntax' for Emoticons. – 7. Minor Features: Graphic Peculiarities, Parenthesis and Line Spacing. – 8. Conclusions.

1 Introduction

Keitai shōsetsu, or 'mobile phone novels', is a recent social and 'literary' phenomenon dating to the beginning of this century that has since become widely diffused in Japan. Novels, often written by amateur authors, are distributed via mobile phones and on the Web, and read by a huge number of people. The writing process, the tool used for editing and reading, the age and social characteristics of those involved in the phenomenon require further analysis to help our understanding of the unique features of this text genre.

In this article I will provide a brief overview of how the phenomenon of 'mobile phone novels' became diffused, and outline the results of a linguistic analysis I carried out in an attempt to analyse some shared characteristics of the language used in the works I sampled. My research was intended to help me understand if, and eventually to what extent, the use of a new writing tool and of a new communication system had modified the language in terms of vocabulary, syntax and orthography.

2 Mobile Phone Novels

The publication in 2000 of *Deep Love: Ayu no monogatari* (Deep Love: The Story of Ayu) is considered to have marked the birth of *keitai shōsetsu* in Japan.[1] The novel appeared on *Zavn*, a private Japanese website (`http://www.zavn.net`) administrated by 'Yoshi', the *nom de plume* of the novel's author. Since the issue of this 'first' digital novel, an almost incalculable number of other works has appeared on the Internet and circulated through the mobile phone system used by a large audience of readers to follow their favourite authors. *Deep Love*, like other successful *keitai shōsetsu*, was later printed and sold as a hardcopy book, and even gave rise to a film, a TV drama and a manga series.[2] The whole series of four printed volumes describing the daily lives of Ayu – a young girl who decides to be a prostitute to round out her income – and of her friends, seems to have sold over 2.5 million copies by the end of 2004 (Yoshida 2008, p. 45 as quoted in La Marca 2011, p. 6).

Another work, *Koizora* (Sky of Love, 2006), written by someone writing under the name of Mika, seems to have received more than 20 million website visits (Onishi 2008); of course, this does not necessarily mean that 20 million people have read the novel, just that the site was viewed 20 million times to read the work. At any rate this figure gives an idea of the dimension of the phenomenon, and of public interest in this kind of new writing.

While the upsurge of *keitai shōsetsu* in Japan has undeniably had an important impact in the editorial and social spheres, the question of the 'literary' value of *keitai shōsetsu* has sparked off a controversial debate on the Japanese scene of literary criticism. Many scholars refuse to see any sort of literary merit in *keitai shōsetsu*, considering them nothing more than a sort of fast-food for uneducated young girls that provides them with some kind of ephemeral appeasement through the writing and reading of

1 See Honda Tōru (2008) quoted in La Marca (2011) a PhD dissertation thesis that contains an accurate description of this magmatic literary phenomenon. I am much indebted to the author for his help in choosing the samples for my linguistic analyses.

2 Four paperbacks: *Deep Love – Ayu no monogatari*, Tokyo, Sutātsu Shuppan, 2002; *Deep Love – Hosuto*, Tokyo, Sutātsu Shuppan, 2003; *Deep Love – Reina no unmei*, Tokyo, Sutātsu Shuppan, 2003; *Deep Love – Pao no monogatari*, Tokyo, Sutātsu Shuppan, 2003. A movie, released as a DVD, with the same title as the first episode appeared in April 2004, and two TV drama series, based on the first and second episodes, were broadcast by TV Tokyo from October 2004 and January 2005, respectively. The TV dramas were also recently released as DVDs. Moreover, a manga version has also been published by the Kōdansha publisher.

self-referential stories narrating their own daily lives.[3] However, others consider this kind of writing a real new literary genre, tracing back similarities with traditional pre-modern forms of literature like the *naniwabushi* (Naniwa tune) of the Tokugawa period (Nakamura 2008, p. 191; La Marca 2011, p. 222).

This is not the place for an in-depth discussion of this issue nor it is the goal of this paper to give an evaluation of the meaning of *keitai shōsetsu* in the sphere of contemporary Japanese literature. In fact, the aforementioned debate has also dealt with a formal question, more than an issue of contents, centred on the applicability of the term *shōsetsu*/novel to the narrative format and subjects of the so-called *keitai shōsetsu*. The question was «Can a *keitai shōsetsu* be considered a 'novel'?» (La Marca 2011, p. 222). It is also worth remembering that this new form of narrative has also inspired traditional novelists, like the popular Setouchi Jakuchō, to tackle the new genre. In 2008, at the age of eighty-six, Setouchi published a *keitai shōsetsu* entitled *Ashita no Niji* (Tomorrow's Rainbow) under the pen name of Pāpuru (purple, recalling the meaning of the Japanese term *murasaki*, a name strongly linked to *The Tale of Genji*).[4] The voice of Setouchi backed that part of the public that appreciates the newness of the phenomenon, and gave some legitimisation to a literary phenomenon that has continued to be centred on a young readership, with popular themes like the worries and problems facing adolescents in their everyday life like love affairs, pregnancy, abortions, suicide, or the death of a beloved boyfriend.

Keitai shōsetsu have also attracted the attention of non-Japanese mass media (Onishi 2008) who have reported the remarkable dimensions of the phenomenon, and the literary debate going on in Japan.

Keitai shōsetsu are read online via mobile phones or using a personal computer, simply accessing one of the web servers specialised in this service.[5] The service itself is usually free of charge, and the providers make a profit from advertising. Every frame (a 'page' of the mobile novel) contains a limited number of characters that fit, more or less, into the device's display (see Figs. 1a-b).

3 For a synopsis of criticisms and debates about the value of *keitai shōsetsu* see Sugiura (2008, pp. 26-28) and La Marca (2011, pp. 214-220).

4 The book, before readable also on the Internet, was also printed in the same year by the Mainichi Shinbunsha.

5 In addition to personal author sites, there are also dedicated *keitai shōsetsu* websites, the most popular and oldest of which are *Mahō no Ai-rando* (`http://ip.tosp.co.jp`) and *Noichigo* (`http://no-ichigo.jp`), which gave many authors the opportunity to upload their works free of charge.

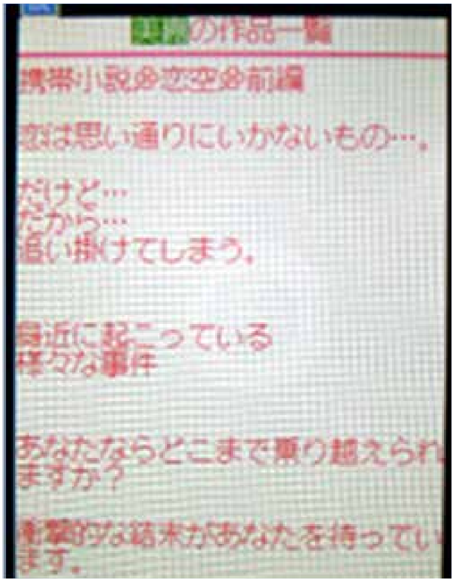

Figure 1a. First page of *Koizora*: mobile frame

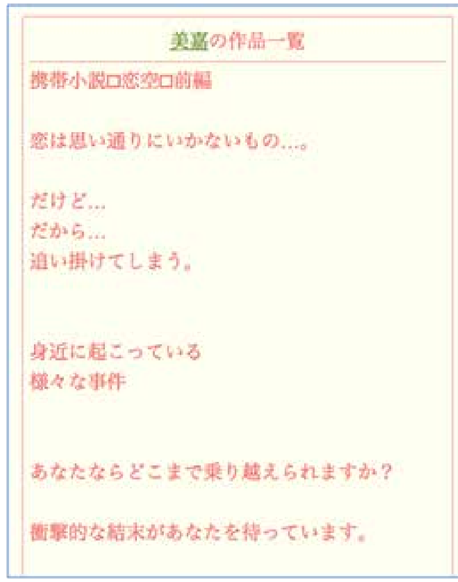

Figure 1b. First page of *Koizora*: computer frame

The visual rendering of the frame, with short lines, and frequent insertion of new lines and blank spaces, and the use of the Japanese version of emoticons give a certain rhythm, recalling that of web chats. This approach is adapted to the form of the narrative structures of most *keitai shōsetsu*. These stories, in fact, are made up of many conversations or streams of consciousness, instead of descriptions and explanations of scenes. As a result, readers are able to read the novels as if they were reading comic books or following an Internet chat.

3 The Sampling of *Keitai Shōsetsu*

For the analyses of a sampling of mobile novels, I decided to include 11 works published in print, from 2006 to 2009, for a total of about 581,000 tokens ('words'). The selection does not represent a true corpus, but rather a collection of texts chosen for their success or representativeness. The table 1 contains the significant data of the works analysed: title, name of the authors, year of publication, total number of words, number of single lexemes,[6] and number of sentences as automatically calculated by the

6 Here «word» means a single morphological unit counted by the computer application (a single «token») whereas «lexeme» is a single lexical item. A single «lexeme» could occur more than one time (and usually it does) and it is counted as a «word» any time it appears in a text.

software Chaki 2.1.[7] The transcription in Roman alphabet is not coupled with Japanese scripts when it represents the original novel's title.

Table 1. List of texts' samples

Title	Author	Date	Words	Lexemes	Sentences
Noroi asobi	Saori	2006 print	32761	4616	3326
Koizora	Mika	2006 print	135019	8661	12415
Love at night	Yūya	2006 print	20442	3017	1938
Teddy Bear	Bea Hime	2006 print	51791	4649	5272
Itoshiki kimi e	Hikari	2007 print	68334	6302	7055
Shi no kusuri	Saori	2007 print	37061	4858	3726
Higai mōsō kareshi	Aporo	2007 print	45015	4990	5636
Moshimo kimi ga	Rin	2007 print	20241	2886	1866
Kono koe ga kareru made	Yuki	2008 print	40479	3621	4732
Atashi kanojo	Kiki	2009 print	45353	4477	15830
Purinsesu	Kimi	2009 print	84755	6186	8479

As is evident from the data, the different novels are not homogeneous from a quantitative point of view, with some texts totalling more than 135,000 words, and others only about 5,000 words. It is possible to argue that the different length of the texts could affect the style of the novels in terms of conciseness and brevity of the sentences but, as far as the features we are interested in are concerned – the use of shortened verbal forms, or insertion of emoticons, for example – no direct relationship has been shown between text length and linguistic style.

4 Shortened Forms

One of the features often considered a characteristic of *keitai shōsetsu* is the use of 'colloquial' forms. The shortened verbal forms just mentioned could be seen as a sign of an informal register. In fact, even though there are differences in the novels analysed here, the majority of them are characterised by a prevalence of shortened forms like the dropping of the vowel *-i-* in the auxiliary verb *iru* (e.g.: V-*te ru* instead of V-*te iru*, V-*te te* instead of V-*te ite*, etc.).

7 Plain file texts have been processed with the Japanese morphological analyser Mecab and then processed with Chaki 2.0 to observe quantitative data and the lexical characteristics and collocations. I wish to thank Dr. Patrizia Zotti (Università degli Studi di Napoli «L'Orientale») for her advice in data processing and for the supply of the necessary software.

Table 2 shows the statistical distribution, for each novel, of the shortened forms vs. non-shortened forms. The cases in which the former exceed the latter are indicated in grey. As one can see, in the majority of cases the shortened forms exceed the number of non-shortened forms:

Table 2. Shortened forms vs. non-shortened forms

Title	**V -*te iru***	**V -*te iru***	**V -*te ite***	**V -*te te***
Noroi asobi 呪い遊び	58	37	16	3
Koizora 恋空	507	320	37	45
Love at night	21	85	4	15
Teddy Bear	220	124	45	36
Itoshiki kimi e 愛しき君へ	82	202	8	47
Shi no kusuri 死の薬	67	95	7	9
Higai mōsō kareshi 被害妄想彼氏	93	85	2	8
Moshimo kimi ga もしもキミが	45	64	11	8
Kono koe ga kareru made この声が枯れるまで	127	76	6	10
Atashi kanojo あたし彼女	65	203	9	19
Purinsesu プリンセス	5	466	1	52

This does not depend only on the widespread presence of dialogical parts mimicking spoken (colloquial) language, but is also due to the use of shortened forms in the descriptive passages of the novels.

The followings are examples of three different uses of shortened forms, all from the novel *Itoshiki kimi e* (My Beloved): a dialogue, a stream of consciousness, and a descriptive passage. I have transcribed the original text, with the unique use of parentheses and emoticons:

綾香【なんの話してるの〜？(^o^)】
Ayaka: «*Nan no hanashi* ***shite ru*** *no – ?* (joyful emoticon)»
Ayaka: «What are speeeaking about? (joyful emoticon)»

後数分後には逢ってるんだ
やばい……
なんか急に緊張してきた…
Ato sūfungo ni wa ***atte ru*** *n da*

Yabai……
Nanka kyū ni kinchō shite kita
In a few minutes I will meet him!
I’m worried……
Suddenly I feel kind of nervous…

高校を卒業してから、有線付きのワンルームマンションで一人暮らしを始めてこっそりと猫を飼ってる
Kōkō o sotsugyō shite kara, yūsentsuki no wanrūmu manshon de hitorigurashi o hajimete kossori to neko o ***katte ru***
After I finished high school, I began to live by myself in one-room apartment with an Internet connection, and I secretly keep a cat

It seems that there is a tendency to ‘write as one speaks’. Also, in descriptive parts, authors follow the oral usage of shortened forms, which are very common in the everyday spoken language. In this case we could speak of a new sort of *genbun itchi* (unification of spoken and written language, as during the Meiji period) where the colloquial forms are reproduced in every textual area. Here there is an even closer correspondence between written and oral texts than in the experimental texts produced by the followers of the ‘movement for the unification of spoken and written language’ during the Meiji period. The use of the same media utilised to exchange messages in chats probably induces the authors of *keitai shōsetsu* to reproduce the language they would use if messaging on a mobile phone in all kind of texts, including the descriptive parts of the novels. This is a case of a diamesic variation (Mioni 1983, p. 508; Berruto 1987, pp. 19-20) based on a ‘diatechnic factor’ (Fiormonte 2003, p. 112), or the complex interaction of multiple technical elements with language. Like other variation factors (diastratic, diaphasic, etc.), the diatechnic factor should also be kept in mind when analysing CMC (Computer Mediated Communication). In fact looking at the texts in our selection, it is clear that the tool used to write *keitai shōsetsu* (the mobile phone) stimulates and supports a writing style characterised by a particular organisation of the space (the phone’s screen), already mentioned above, that contributes to generating a specific reading rhythm produced by the use of short, almost musically syncopated sentences like blank verses. More importantly, the language register is not only the product of a specific register peculiar to the generation of these authors, but also of a transgenerational register sharing common features among mobile phone users. The absence of morphologically articulated honorifics, a more informal style (if compared with the traditional epistolary one), the use of emoticons instead of linguistic expressions to convey politeness, etc. are, for example, some of the characteristics of mobile or chat language (Nishimura 2007) that also characterise the style of *keitai shōsetsu*.

In brief, one could say that diatechnic factors influence both the process of production as well as the process of interpretation of text building, which is a common feature of CMC as can be observed in Internet chat or web forums.

5 Colloquialisms

The language used in *keitai shōsetsu* is generally characterised by the use of so-called colloquialisms, that is, elements usually typical of spoken language in a diamesic variation.

One of these features is the ellipsis of postpositions:

a. *Nan no hanashi Ø shite ru no–?* (Whaaat are you speaking about?) (*Itoshiki kimi e*)

b. *Dōshite kao Ø kakusu n da yo–?* (And why you are hiding your faaace?) (*Love at night*)

c. *Teka, uchi Ø agaru?* (And then, you come in?)
Iya… gaki to kaimono Ø iku kara ii ya (No, that's fine since I'm going shopping with the kids) (*Itoshiki kimi e*)

Here, for example, there is a recurrent omission of object particles (in a. and b. Ø instead of *o*), and place particles in sentences with motion verbs or compounds of motion verbs (in c. Ø instead of *ni* in both cases), but other 'colloquialisms' can be found in lexical features in the following examples.

d. *Kimoi yo* (That's really sick) (*Higai mōsō kareshi*)

e. *Anta maji omoroi na!* (You're a really laugh, aren't you!) (*Itoshiki kimi e*)

f. *Chatto nai de no arashi hodo uzai mono wa nai* (There's no hassle more than a nuisance in a chat) (*Itoshiki kimi e*)

g. *Imifu nan desu kedo* (I haven't got a clue, though) (*Atashi kanojo*)

h. *Datte, Saku, atarashii kēban oshiete kurenai jan* (Heck, Saku won't give me the number of the new mobile, that's why!!) (*Noroi asobi*)

In these cases, we observe the use of lexical forms typical of the language of young people. First of all, there is a series of words, often derivations from 'standard' forms, in which the actual meaning is not the result of the sum of the words from which they are derived or, in other cases, where the words are used with a different meaning. This is the case of the adjectives *kimoi* (‘unpleasant’, usually referred to a person, < *kimochi warui*), *omoroi* (‘funny’ < *omoshiroi*) and *uzai* (‘unpleasant’ feeling about being tailed or shadowed < *uzattai*) in d., e. and f., respectively, as well as the adverbial use of *maji* (‘really’ < *majime* ‘serious’), which is not followed by the adverbial particle *ni* in the same example e. Also *imifu* ([what you say is] ‘unclear’, ‘[I] do not understand’ < *imifumei*) belongs to the category of shortened expression used with a new meaning. Shortened forms are also used to speak about things or objects that are perceived as ‘new’ or belonging to the sphere of the daily lives of young people like *kēban* (‘telephone number of a mobile phone’ < *keitai bangō*), as in h.

At a morphosyntactic level, we also find expressions that could again be the result of shortened forms, like the phrase *tte ka* (< *to iu ka*, ‘or perhaps I’d say’) in i. and j. This is a morphophonological transformation of a standard expression, used together with its alternative forms *te yū ka* and *tsū ka* to express second thoughts within one’s statements or to oppose an argument of the interlocutor, and is a typical pet word that occurs in conversations of young people. The example j. (in which we find again the form *teka*) also contains two other elements typical of colloquial language: the form *jan* for the copula, and the auxiliary *mitaina*. The first, popular in colloquial Japanese since the beginning of the 1980s, is a transformation of the phrase *janai ka* (isn’t it?) that has become a sort of colloquial but polite substitute for the copula *desu* especially in women’s language, while *mitaina* is the auxiliary *mitai* (‘it seems that’, ‘it is like a…’) with the particle *na* in principle used to link *mitai* to the following noun as in […] *mitai-na ki ga shimasu* (‘I have the impression that […]’). But the form *mitaina* is now used at the end of a sentence to close an utterance, and as a strategy used by the speaker to avoid responsibility for the contents of the utterance. In other words, it often occurs when speakers seek to distance themselves from in the statement that they have just made:

i. *Hijiri, omae kōkōsei darō… kaere yo. Tte ka, gakkō ike yo* (Hijiri, you are an high school student, right? Go away! I’d say, go to school!) (*Noroi asobi*)

j. *Kareshi? Mā atarimae ni iru teka inai wakenai jan mitaina* (A boyfriend? Of course she has one… or it’s better to say… it’s not the case she hasn’t got one, so to say) (*Atashi kanojo*)

Another phenomenon that was discovered concerns the use of shortened potential forms of verbs, the so-called *ranuki kotoba* (words lacking -*ra*). As known, the potential auxiliary suffix for the vowel verbs (-*eru* and -*iru* ending verbs) and the ‘irregular verb’ *kuru* (to come) is -*rareru* and verbs like *mi-ru* (to see), *tabe-ru* (to eat) and *ku-ru* change to *mi-rareru*, *tabe-*

rareru and *ko-rareru*, respectively, for their potential forms ('can see', 'can eat', 'can come'). In spoken Japanese dropping the first syllable *ra* of the suffix produces forms like *mi-reru*, *tabe-reru* and *ko-reru* that are considered 'informal' and 'colloquial'. In the samples that have been analysed, the *ranuki dōshi* are extensively used in dialogical parts, 'faithfully' representing the colloquial register of the protagonists as in the following sentences where the shortened verbal forms are underlined:

k. *Ima kara omoshiroi no <u>mireru</u> yo* (You will soon see an interesting one!) (*Higai mōsō kareshi*)

l. *obachan no gohan <u>tabereru</u> shi* (and I can also eat the meal of my aunt) (*Teddy Bear*)

m. *Nande anna toppyōshi mo nai koto bakka <u>kangaereru</u> no kashira ne* (But why is he able to think only about crazy things?) (*Purinsesu*)

In some cases it is possible to observe the use of the dictionary (conclusive) form of adjectives instead of the adverbial form as in the following examples (all from *Itoshiki kimi e*): «*Sugoi sabishikatta*» (I felt terribly sad), «*Omoroi hanashita zo*» (I said quite interesting things), «*Erai ochikondoru*» (I am very depressed). If we consider these three examples as three sentences (in the sense that we do not analyse, for example, '*sugoi*' and '*sabishikatta*' as two distinct sentences) we would expect the adverbial suffix -*ku* after the stem of the three adjectives (*sugoku*, *omoroku*, *eraku*). It seems to be a phenomenon linked to adjectives occurring in exclamatory sentences like '*Sugoi!*' (Impressive!) '*Omoshiroi*!' (Funny!), and so on, often present in young people's conversations, which are acquiring a sort of invariable morphology. In some cases, adjectives are used without the suffix -*i* (conclusive form used also for adjectival predicate) like in '*ano kokoa maji uma*' (that chocolate was really good, *Atashi kanojo*) in which *uma* is the stem of the adjective *umai* (tasty) and is combined with the above-mentioned *maji* as in *maji sugo* (really impressive), *maji era* (quite admirable).

Needless to say, this kind of feature is not unique to *keitai shōsetsu* but marks the register of the slang typical of the young Japanese speakers that are represented in the stories of these novels. They are also the majority of the readers attracted by this kind of narrative. The set of different elements, lexical and morphosyntactical, recalling the jargon of the young, empathetically links writers and readers of *keitai shōsetsu*, who share same diastratic elements in a new social environment, through a telecommunication network constituted by mobile phones and personal computers.

6 A 'Syntax' for Emoticons

As mentioned before, *keitai shōsetsu* share with e-mails, and, more significantly, with computer chat, a sort of transiency; in other words, the possibility – or at least the feeling – that the writer can add pieces of sentences, amend previous statements, complete the reasoning in sentences following the one in which he or she started to affirm something.

In particular, anger, happiness, tenderness, etc. are not emotions that could be easily expressed in mobile or chat messaging, which requires short sentences and quick replies. It is probably for this reason that the use of emoticons has flourished in these kinds of texts as a tool to integrate the «lack of iconicity» (Fiormonte 2003, p. 116) of the telematic communication. The *keitai shōsetsu* share the same use of emoticons in descriptive parts of the novels as well as in the quotation of dialogues or in the fictional transcriptions of mobile messaging often present in these texts. In general, *kaomoji* (lett. face-characters), as they are usually called in Japanese, are used as a surrogate of the FTF (face-to-face) communication to enrich the CMC. In particular, *kaomoji* have a role in smoothing the strength of a statement (like the sentence-ending phrases '*keredomo…*' and '*no desu ga…*' in spoken Japanese) or in adding information about the communicative intentions and feelings of the source of the message. Like linguistic elements involved in the formation of the mood of sentences, emoticons are often placed at the end of a sentence.

The use of creative sequences of different kinds of signs (usually different forms of *kanji* and *kana*) helps the author to enrich the sense of the text, and the reader to acquire more information about the writer's message.

綾香《てか画面の向こうで雑魚もニヤニヤしとる癖に！笑いたかったら
笑え！素直じゃないねんから！雑魚ちゃん♥ψ(`▽´)ψ》

Figure 2. Frame 38 of *Itoshiki kimi e*

For example, the character string ♥ψ(`▽´)ψ included in the last part of sentence in Fig. 2 seems to express joy, or happiness: there is a coloured heart (the heart always adds overtones of tenderness) after Zako-*chan*, the nickname of one of the characters, followed by two hands raised ψ ψ to the side of a face (round brackets stands for a 'face') with the two shut eyes in sign of happiness `▽´.

a. そう思ったら眠れない
(T-T)

b. まだまだ考えが甘い
(´,_ゝ`)

c. 俺はいつもポケットに安定剤を入れるのが習慣になったよ（´д`）

d. 必死だね(´,_ゝ`)ﾌﾟｯ無視無視

In a. the two ‘T’s in round brackets stand for shut eyes from which tears are running down. In b. the sequence of signs, again in round brackets, means a faint smile with the right angle of the mouth going up, while sequence in c. represents a sad and depressed face. It is interesting to note that the same *kaomoji* shown in b. is followed by a small script *katakana* sequence プッ (*pu!*) in the last example in d. It is added to the *kaomoji* meaning a vague smile in order to mean an outburst of laughter. The last d. represents a sad and depressed face.

These kinds of signs all derive from the so-called 2nd channel emoticons, a repertory of *kaomoji* different from the basic emoticons used in the West, like **:)** or **:(** and their equivalent pictorial representations such as ☺ and ☹. Like the Chinese, Japanese and Korean characters used in word processing (CJK computing), they are based on a 2-byte character set, unlike the ASCII characters used for ‘Western emoticons’. Generally speaking, they make use of Cyrillic and non-Japanese characters in order to enhance the potentiality of the system and to create complex meanings. They are somehow culturally influenced. For example in order to show ‘bowing’ in sense of respect or to ‘beg pardon’, the sequence **m(_ _)m** is used. It is the graphic representation of two hands (or fists, the two ‘**m**’s) at the sides of a head of a person squatting on a Japanese straw mat, mimicking a formal bow on a *tatami*.

Japanese *kaomoji* can be ‘expanded’ by adding one or more graphic elements that convey additional meanings to the core of the graphic icon. For example, the following

(。・・)ノ◇

represents a face with two eyes (・・) while the first small circle 。 represents a cheek and, being on the right side of the ‘face’, indicates that the face is turned to the left, and ノ◇ are, respectively, an arm and a *zabuton* (a square floor cushion).[8] In fact the *kaomoji* is followed by the linguistic expression *zabuton, dōzo* (Please, [have a] cushion) providing a linguistic explanation of the meaning of the iconic utterance.

Combinations of chains of basic elements can expand the basic meaning (for example ‘sadness’, ‘laugh’, ‘envy’, etc.) in order to mean ‘deep

8 I wish to thank Dr. Claudia Iazzetta (Università degli Studi di Napoli «L’Orientale») for her help and suggestions in interpreting the meaning of *kaomoji*.

sadness', 'big laugh', 'strong envy'. In some cases *kaomoji* can also be combined with linguistic elements as in:

壁|_-)あそぼうーや

in which the word *kabe* (wall) is written in *kanji* and followed by the sign **|** (the limit of the wall) and by the emoticon **_-)** (a face half hidden by the wall, the entire face being **(-__-)**). The *kaomoji* is followed by the sentence *asobō ya* (let's have fun!) as if the speaker had popped up from behind a wall shouting «Let's have fun!» In this case, then, the *kanji* 壁 (*kabe*, wall) has an iconic function, and is not read as a word, but only looked at as if it were a conventionalised picture, a sort of hieroglyph.

As previously stated, this kind of semi-iconic system of communication, generated within the CMC, is widely shared in the writing of *keitai shōsetsu* and, leaving aside personal differences between authors, it is an integrated element of the writing style of mobile novels with a rather important role in the understanding of the nuances conveyed by the text.

7 Minor Features: Graphic Peculiarities, Parenthesis and Line Spacing

The fact that the tool used to generate (to write) and to make use of (to read) *keitai shōsetsu* is a mobile phone also influences some of the graphic characteristics of the text and the use of *kanji* (Chinese characters). In fact, a mobile phone may have more potentialities, but it also has some limitations when compared to writing on a personal computer or even handwriting.

In our analysis we noticed a diffused use of *kanji* to write formal nouns like *tame* (for, purpose), *wake* (reason) or verbal suffixes like *-nai* (not) and, more in general, words that in modern written Japanese are usually in *kana*, like *kinō* (yesterday), *kawaii* (cute). This usage stands out in particular because of the colloquial and informal register of the texts of mobile phone novels. Usually, one would not find *kinō* written 昨日 in a sentence like *ore kinō nanka shita?* (Did I do something yesterday?), an utterance characterised by the informal male pronoun *ore*, the shortened and colloquial form *nanka* for *nanika* (something), and the absence of a polite suffix for the verb ending. The same Chinese characters could be read as *sakujitsu*, a more formal word for 'yesterday', but it is clear from the rest of the sentence's style, and confirmed by native speakers, that in this context the natural reading of the word is *kinō*. The same could be said for *wake* or *tame* as found in the following two sentences:

a. なんの為に病院なんかいくんだ？
Nan no tame ni byōin nanka iku n da? (Why the hell are you going to the hospital?) (*Itoshiki kimi e*)

b. ある訳ないじゃん。
Aru wake nai jan. (It's impossible that there's one!) (*Atashi kanojo*)

c. 安全なんて保証は無いんだ。
Anzen nante hoshō wa nai n da. (Safety? There is no guarantee for that!) (*Love at night*)

Looking at the original Japanese script, it is evident that there is a sort of unbalance between the linguistic style, the presence of 'unexpected' *kanji* and, on the contrary, the absence of staple Chinese characters normally used in written Japanese (in a. *nan* is written in *kana* but *tame* in *kanji*; in b., a very colloquial sentence, *wake* is written in *kanji*, and in c. even the negative suffix -*nai* has its form in Chinese character).

One reason for this could be the ease of transcribing *kanji* using a mobile phone keyboard (the same could be said for the Japanese input system on personal computers). The user does not need any particular mnemonic ability to convert the phonetic form into *kanji* and *kana* nor the time to write down complex characters made by a large number of strokes, as required in handwriting. Moreover, another reason for the 'over usage' of Chinese characters could be the screen mechanism prompting the *kanji* corresponding to the word that the user is typing, since the user has only to press the selection already suggested by the mobile phone without the need for any other complex operation.

Space-saving considerations could be another reason, given the limited space available in a mobile phone screen, but this does not really seem to be a factor involved in the phenomenon or something deliberately pursued by writers. In fact, while writing *wake* or *tame* in *kanji* saves one character compared with the equivalent *kana* script (訳 and 為 instead of わけ and ため), the negative suffix -*nai* in both cases (*kana* alone or *kanji* plus *kana* for the inflectional part of the suffix) requires two characters: ない or 無い.

Another characteristic feature of *keitai shōsetsu* regards the peculiar usage of parenthesis and punctuation.

There are no fixed rules, and the use of parentheses differs according to each author, but it is evident that strategies exist to make clear who is speaking, who is thinking, who is exchanging e-mails or chat messages on the small screen. Unlike in printed novels, direct speech quotes are often enclosed in brackets like 『...』 or 【...】 instead of the usual 「...」. Each author develops an internal system to differentiate parentheses for direct speech, soliloquies, etc., and we also noticed authors (Yūya, *Love at night*) using two kinds of different parenthesis to distinguish two characters taking part in the same conversation.

But as we have already mentioned, the particular line spacing and line breaks play a key role in contributing to the recognition of changes in speakers, monologues, streams of consciousness. We have also encountered unusual punctuation like that used in newspaper headlines where the end of a sentence is indicated by a line break instead of a full stop.

8 Conclusions

It is clear that, by virtue of its language and the nature of the themes tackled, *keitai shōsetsu* can be considered a new literary genre. We have also seen how it contributes to the analysis of the evolution of the Japanese language in terms of interaction between the language and the tool used for the communication, as well as to the examination of the hybridisation of language styles and registers through the combination of different diamesic elements.

Generally speaking, the language of *keitai shōsetsu* combines the style typical of 'serious' literary prose with the style of a CMC where deliberate informality contributes to the vitality of the text as well as being familiar to young readers making extensive use of mobile phones for chatting and net surfing in their everyday lives. As Bonomi noted for the Italian language used on the web (2010, pp. 24-25), *keitai shōsetsu* language is also marked synchronically by a large variety of linguistic registers as well as recalling everyday technological communication, giving the reader the feeling of a semi-synchronic and dialogical interaction with the author.

The technical aspect, that is, the use of mobile phones, to read and (not always) write novels represents a far from negligible element that influences the kind of relationship developed between writer and reader; although not semi-synchronically linked through an Internet chat, they share the same linguistic attitude as if connected via mobile phone or personal computer. This means that the reader is ready to accept all the communication strategies normally used for on-line CMC (colloquially-written Japanese, emoticons as an integration of psychological and emotive description, peculiar line spacing and graphical resources to enhance the communication, etc.), and participates in the decoding process in a way that is formally different from the traditional reading process. It is likely that the concise terse style of mobile phone novels does not permit precise outlines of character psychologies, and that the use of emoticons as a surrogate for feelings is probably too shallow a device to convey the emotions of the author. In fact, despite the huge number of emoticons available, they are too stereotyped to allow subtle depictions of emotions, feelings, or psychological drives.

Although it is impossible to say today whether the phenomenon of mobile phone novels *per se* will be a lasting one, it has undoubtedly revealed new potentialities in written Japanese communication, and in literary (whatever we intend by 'literary') works. We can be certain that this text genre will continue to characterise a portion of the Japanese written production, and represents a worthwhile field of investigation for linguistic research.

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An Ancient Writing System for Modern Japan

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Abstract This essay deals with what we could call 'the adequacy of a writing system to the society it serves'. It is intended to be a sociolinguistic approach to writing, which is, however, seldom tackled by modern linguists. In other words, the question can be reformulated as: 'How does the mixed logophonographic *kanji-kana majiri* writing system presently used in Japan work in modern Japanese society? And, above all, does it fulfil its task or is it too cumbersome, causing difficulty in learning and manipulation? Or, on the contrary, is it too poor, causing inadequacy and ambiguity?'

Summary 1. An Outline of the Problem. – 2. Japanese Writing System in Modern Society. – 3. A Different Approach to Japanese Writing System. – 4. Concluding Remarks. – Appendix.

1 An Outline of the Problem

I will discuss the case of the modern Japanese writing system by starting with two fundamental points, one a statement and one a question:

1. The writing system of present-day Japan is ancient (statement);
2. Considering the first point, how does this ancient writing system work in modern Japanese society? (question).

As to the first point, there are good reasons to support the view that the present-day Japanese writing system is ancient. If we look at the Latin alphabet, we can acknowledge that it is without a doubt ancient, even more ancient than the system used by the Japanese.

We may argue over the meaning of 'ancient' in reference to a writing system. Actually, it has a double meaning: 1. The characters have a long history. 2. The 'system' – how it works or how it is related to the spoken language – has developed in ancient times, and has remained ossified at an old stage. Of course, here I am referring to the second case.

As regards the English writing system, for example, nobody can deny that it is typical of the second case since it represents language at an older stage, and has remained fixed at that stage. The question, then, is the reciprocal relation between a writing system and language.

The present-day Japanese writing system, which was also developed in ancient times, has remained fundamentally unchanged up to now, and has influenced the spoken language.

In fact, what we now call *kanji-kana majiri,* a mixed form of writing with sinograms (*kanji*) and phonetic characters (*kana*), was developed many centuries ago, and became the most widespread form of *buntai*, or written style with the name of *wakan konkōbun* – a sort of mixed Sino-Japanese – from around the beginning of the thirteenth century. This system prevailed from then on, and, notwithstanding many changes and reforms in recent times, maintained its basic structure.

The Japanese language has a mixed vocabulary of *kango* and *wago*, or 'Chinese words' and 'Japanese words'. The former must be written in sinograms, whereas the latter can also be written phonetically, as well as the functional parts of the language. Therefore, until now, the contemporary use of sinograms and Japanese syllabic alphabet has remained unavoidable, complicating the matter of writing in Japan.

The success of *wakan konkōbun* from the Kamakura period (1192-1333) onwards, superseded the largely phonographic writing system that had been used previously. Although this former system could have become the model for the modern writing system, for various reasons, it did not, and a gap developed between the spoken and written language. This is a gap that continues to be present today.

In the Meiji period (1868-1912), when the Latin alphabet began to spread in Japan, the 'problem of a difficult writing system' came strongly to the fore. Many intellectuals and politicians strove to change it, or rather, to simplify it. Though they had little success in the beginning, in recent years many reforms were carried out. This nevertheless, the Japanese writing system continues to be considered one of the most complicated existing in the world today, if not the most complicated. The complexity of the modern Japanese writing system has caused a series of significant consequences. However, before dealing with the 'consequences', let us briefly examine what is intended by 'complicated'.

Complication derives from the following factors:

1. contemporaneous use of different types of characters;
2. difficulty of standardisation and presence of many non-standard forms;
3. large number of sinograms (notwithstanding the presence of restrictive lists) in general use;
4. unstable relationship between sinograms and syllabic alphabet;
5. personal inclinations in writing.

Much of the complication comes from the hybrid nature of this writing system, which combines two different kinds of characters, logographs (sinograms) and phonograms (*kana* syllabaries). An additional source of difficulty is the non-standard use and reading of characters developed in the past and still utilised today. In fact, the many strata of non-standard and learned variations that have accumulated over the centuries have never been eliminated or simplified. In both the spoken and written languages, the Japanese have continued to maintain ossified forms, expressions, styles and words because they are considered a source of cultural richness.

2 Japanese Writing System in Modern Society

Now, let's turn to the second point by trying to answer the following question: how does this ancient writing system work in Japanese modern society?

The general principle for the evaluation of the efficacy and adequacy of a writing system in modern society regards its capacity to manipulate and transmit information in a convenient, quick and efficient manner. This demands a rapid, widespread and smooth dissemination of information throughout society. Language in modern society has a primarily communicative role. It allows easy communication among the members of society and facilitates the ever-increasing flux of information.

If we consider that the function of writing consists mainly in conveying information, we must conclude that the Japanese writing system is cumbersome, difficult and complex (see Hirai 1998). Therefore, it is scarcely adequate to the task of bringing about the clear and swift exchange of information necessary in a modern society. It is a hindrance to smooth communication both within Japanese society and abroad. The transmission of information and the communicative roles would be better carried out by a light and simple writing system with a strong logical structure.

An ideal writing system should be:

1. standardised (in order to enhance communication and prevent miscommunication);
1. relatively simple (to learn and to use);
2. democratic (accessible to all members of society);
3. versatile (i.e. capable of being applied in any field);
4. flexible (i.e. able to express a multiplicity of new concepts);
5. sophisticated (i.e. capable of refinement and diversity of expression in the various fields) (Twine 1991, p. 28).

Now, how does the present-day Japanese writing system perform with regard to the six points above? Adopting a simple scheme, using '+' for a positive answer, '-' for a negative, we can create the following table:

Table 1

standardized	relatively simple	democratic	versatile	flexible	sophisticated
-	-	-	+	+	+

From Table 1, we can draw the conclusion that the writing system currently used in Japan has the advantage of being: versatile, flexible, and sophisticated, but the disadvantage of being difficult and complex, not standardised and accessible only through long training.

In particular, in spite of the restrictive list called *jōyō kanjihyō* (regular-use Chinese characters list), sinograms are too numerous and difficult to learn and to use. They require an intense effort of memorisation and must be studied many years to be learnt. Moreover, they are cumbersome for daily use. However, it seems that Japan has one of the highest levels of literacy in the world, though this view is increasingly becoming doubtful.[1] In any case, literacy in Japan confirms the incredible learning capacity of human beings, even in the presence of an objectively difficult and complicated system. However, this is at the cost of great effort and an extended span of time.

Moreover, at international level, Japan's efforts to increase exchanges with foreign countries are unquestionably linguistically hindered by the difficulty of its writing system (see Galan 2005; Carroll 2011).

In recent years, some outstanding linguists (like Yamada Isao and Umesao Tadao, for example) have once again resumed one of the main proposals of the movement for the modernisation of the language of the Meiji period: the romanization of the Japanese writing system. They say that «in a global information society, the Japanese language and its writing system now face new challenges. In spite of the fact that the Japanese language belongs to the structurally simplest category in the world, it has the most complex writing system, and, therefore, it is not readily embraced in the world theater, while it is also cumbersome, inefficient and stressful to render into machine readable form for processing» (Yamada 1973, p. 33).

Again, as in the past, the question of the capacity of competing with the Western nations (America and Europe) is seen as crucial, and in this perspective, the cumbersome writing system of Japan is considered an obstacle compared to the alphabet (see Umesao 2004).

It cannot be denied that from the point of view of Information Technology and efficiency in communication, they are right.

3 A Different Approach to Japanese Writing System

From a different point of view, however, a complicated and rich system has the advantage of being versatile, flexible and sophisticated. Compared to the Italian alphabet, the Japanese writing system is distinguished by a much richer level of cultural meaningfulness. The alphabet is a pure tool, a useful one of course, but still a mere tool. On the contrary, the Japanese

1 This view is coming increasingly under doubt. See Masiko 2006; Yamashita 2011.

kanji-kana majiri is the condensation of Japanese culture: it is the product of the encounter between Chinese civilisation and Japanese indigenous tradition. The employment of a complex and sophisticated linguistic code makes it possible to develop an almost unlimited range of nuances in the expression of ideas, concepts and intentions. When used, it is possible to create a particular richness of expression with ability and competence.

As regards versatility or the capacity to be applied to any field, flexibility or the capacity to express a multiplicity of new concepts and sophistication, or the capacity of refinement and diversity of expression in various fields, the Japanese writing system shows a high level of all the three.

A key feature of the *kanji-kana majiri* system is that, on one hand, it permits the easy and economical creation of new words in the form of *kango* or Chinese compound words by uniting two or more sinograms. The words thus produced have also the advantage of being 'transparent words' whose meaning is generally easily understood by the reader. This particular flexibility in the field of the lexicon was widely employed in the Meiji period when a great number of new words arriving from the West had to be created. Nowadays, loan words and calques from foreign languages are preferred, but the possibility of easily creating *kango* is preserved.

A highly appreciated and unique feature of the Japanese writing system is its capacity to produce 'variations' of the basic form of *kanji-kana majiri*. According to requirements of space, conciseness, expression of details, richness of meaning, the kind of the text, type of addressee, and so on, the Japanese writing system can assume a 'dense' or a 'diluted' form. This feature is one of the main characteristics of the past system, when many *buntai*, or forms of the written language existed simultaneously. This required a great investment of effort when studying. The reformations of the written language in the past decades have largely eliminated the abundant number of written styles, but not the fundamental capacity to produce variations, or 'modulations'. These can span from quite 'pure Japanese', as used in some novels (diluted form), to a kind of 'sinicised' style where almost only sinograms are employed, as in the first pages of important newspapers (dense form).

Let's see an example, considering the visual impact:

1. Sinicised style
「韓国の金融委員会は18日、七つの相互貯蓄銀行を6カ月間の営業停止処分にした。自己資本比率が1%未満で、負債が資産を上回っていることなどが理由。法律で５千万ウォン（約350万円）以下の預金は全額保護されるが、対象の銀行に預金者らが駆けつけ、一部で混乱が起きた。相互貯蓄銀行は主に庶民向けの金融機関だが、乱脈融資による経営不振が指摘され、金融当局が国内85行の調査を続けていた」。(«Kankoku» 2011)
The Korean Finance Committee on the 18th, decided the suspension of activity for seven Mutual Savings Banks for six months because

the capital-asset ratio does not reach 1%, and the debt is higher than the asset. From a legal point of view, under 50 million *won* (that is 3.5 million *yen*) of deposits, the entire sum is protected, but as to the banks in question, the depositors ran to withdraw their money causing a partial perturbation. The Mutual Savings Banks are basically financial institution for general people, but since unprofitable operations caused by disordered financial activity were detected, the financial authority has continued inspection of 85 institution in the country. (Translation by the Author)

2. Pure Japanese style
そうですね。そこまではなかなかわかりません。「会って話そう」と向こうが言ったわけだから、それはある程度割り切らなくては仕方がないですね。それから自分の話したことが本になるとういうのは、けっこう大きなことです。自分の体験談としてわあわあしゃべると、家族やらまわりの人やらは、「うるさいな」という反応を見せることも多いんですが、こうして本になって活字で読むと、腹におさまっていくんですね。「ああ、そういうことだったのか」とまわりにもわかってもらえるんです。そういう意味では喜ばれたんじゃないでしょうか。(Murakami 2003, pp. 268-299)
Really. I cannot understand as far as that. Since he said «Let's meet and discuss» it is a matter of course on which I cannot agree. Besides, the fact that what I said becomes a book is an important fact. Speaking bla bla of my own experience, the people of my family and all the other people around will certainly respond saying to me «annoying». I will keep only for myself the publishing of the book and reading it. «Ah! Is it like that!» so that all people around can understand. In this sense, is it not something for which to rejoice? (Translation by the Author)

In both cases we have *kanji-kana majiri*, but the ranges of Chinese compound words and Japanese words, and consequently of phonographs and logographs are very different, as is their visual impact. In the first case, the percentage of sinograms is 58.2%, whereas *kana* are 36%. In the second case, sinograms are a scanty 14% and *kana* soar to 78%. As is evident, the sinicised style employs a larger number of sinograms, on the contrary the (almost) pure Japanese style has many more *kana* phonographs. The reason for this is that Chinese *kango* words need to be written exclusively in sinograms, while Japanese *wago* words are normally, though not always, written in *kana*.

Let's see the following examples in two variations:

1. 事業継続性強化支援 *Jigyō keizokusei kyōka shien* (Business continuity reinforcement support) (dense form);
2. 事業の継続性を強化するための支援 *Jigyō no keizokusei o kyōka suru tame no shien* (diluted form);

or

3. 家庭用電源 *Kateiyō dengen* (Home power supply) (dense form);
4. 家庭で用いる電源 *Katei de mochiiru dengen* (diluted form).

This feature has the advantage of transmitting messages in different ways, or more precisely, of adapting the form of the written language to the content and purpose of the message. The sinicised form is dense, concentrated, deeply meaningful, rapid and immediate. It is appropriately used in the titles of the articles in newspapers, and occasionally in the transmission of concentrated messages. It avoids redundancy and unnecessary information, limiting its scope to the essential.

On the other hand, when the purpose is aesthetic or the nuances of the language play a role in creating a particular atmosphere, such as in novels, it is possible to use a more sophisticated language capable of exalting the intricacy of human sentiments, one that is less abrupt, more diluted, rich in grammatical and syntactical modulations.

To a certain extent every language possesses this capacity. However, the case of the Japanese writing system is a case apart because of the impressive range of variations. It is also reflected in the visible aspect of the language, given the choice of the characters that appear on the sheet of paper.

McLuhan would say that each medium produces a different message or effect on the human sensorium. Or, put it in another way, different messages can be better expressed by different mediums (that is, different kinds of written language), meaning that the medium participates in the formulation of the content.

Elasticity, flexibility, versatility and sophistication are qualities that require complexity of the medium. Richness of expression is only possible with a rich linguistic code, and here there is no shortcut.

In 1993, the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs («Kokugo shingikai hōkoku» 1993) declared that the reform on language aimed to produce «a clear, precise, beautiful, rich language», condensing in few words an ideal language for modern Japan. It is interesting to note that out of the four adjectives, two of them are concerned with efficiency: 'clear' and 'precise', and two are concerned with sophistication: 'beautiful' and 'rich', with a balanced view.

The dilemma between efficiency and sophistication is a difficult one, and is mostly a problem of balance. How to conjugate the two is a matter of speculation. But in any case, the very fact of having such a balanced aim in modern Japan is remarkable in itself.

4 Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, how can we assess the writing system of modern Japan in light of the above considerations?

It can be said that when the Japanese carried out the reformations of the writing system starting from the Meiji period, a conservative approach prevailed, and simplification was limited to removing the biggest obstacles: a radical reform was never their aim. This was probably due to their intention to preserve their own cultural tradition, which was largely expressed in written form. For this reason, the Japanese writing system fundamentally maintains the ancient structure even in modern Japan.

In order to give the writing system the role and the function that it deserves, we must remember that language, and the writing system which is part of it, is not only a means of communication, but also has a symbolic function within society. A concrete example of this is its importance as a means for preserving and transmitting the traditional culture of the past. We must not neglect the fact that 'language is culture', and that the written language has a special role in this process. Besides, it is the concrete expression of the spirit of the people who speak and write it, as the German thinker Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) says: «since language, in whatever shape we may receive it, is always the mental exhalation of a nationally individual life» (Losonsky 1999, p. 51).

Therefore, approaching a writing system only from the point of view of its communicative capacity may be reductive.

In Japan, simplifying language has always been considered a way of impoverishing the cultural environment. Reform was carried out only when inevitable. The quality of the written language in pre-modern Japan is undoubtedly one of the greatest expressions of an equally rich cultural-social background. In Japan, the equation between cultural richness and linguistic (especially written) richness, which implies complication, is a matter of fact that cannot be denied. The critical point in reformation is a balance between efficacy and economy, and the preservation of past tradition and cultural brilliance.

In short, the Japanese writing system is a complicated writing system that combines the fundamental structure of the past with some of the non-standard features that became consolidated during the later centuries. Certainly, this causes communication difficulties and creates obstacles for internationalisation. However, the Japanese writing system reveals a high degree of flexibility and versatility. Above all, it retains a richness of expression and sophistication that may justify the will to preserve it and, according to recent trends, to reduce efforts towards a more simplified system.

The Japanese writing system makes us reconsider the profile of an ideal writing system for modern society. How important is its richness and sophistication, especially in relation to its simplicity? And, in conclusion, is the role of writing limited to 'allowing easy communication among the members of society', or does it have a more demanding role?

The considerations above come from a mostly external point of view. They represent the perspective of a European (or American) who uses the alphabet as a writing system. Therefore, they should be considered as just one possible opinion. In order to have a balanced view, we need to consider also the internal perspective, i.e. that of the Japanese themselves.

Now, what do the Japanese think of their writing system? The answer can be found in the questionnaires of the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs.

The first in 1998, inquires about the consciousness of *kanji*, asking: «Do you think that *kanji* are important and convenient?».

The second in 2006, inquires about the real use of the restrictive list of sinograms in everyday life, asking: «Do you consider the list of *Jōyō kanji* when writing?».

The third, of the same year, is concerned with writing by means of computers and other electronic devices, asking: «In comparison to the questionnaire of the year 1995, do you think that the sinograms that you have forgotten have increased?». The reason for this inquiry is that the use of electronic devices for writing is supposed to favour the oblivion of sinograms.

As the results of the questionnaires show, the Japanese consider sinograms indispensable in the Japanese writing system. Moreover, the most interesting response is the one to the 5th question. When asked if, «Are *kanji* characters that make the Japanese writing system difficult?» only 12.2% responded «yes». This means that few Japanese consider sinograms difficult. This may be surprising to Western eyes, but we must remember that Japanese people learn them while they are young and therefore find them less burdening.

To summarize, the Japanese writing system is objectively complex. As viewed from the outside by neutral eyes and considering its structure, it is complex and cumbersome. It is rather irregular and scarcely efficient, at least from the point of view of smooth, rapid and efficient transmission of information. However, as seen from the inside, it has a great capacity of modulation and richness of expression.

The two perspectives – from the outside and from the inside – can provide different evaluations. It is just like saying that, objectively, the Italian language is much more difficult than the English language at a spoken level, for example, in terms of grammar. However, if you ask Italians, they will say English is much more hard.

In short, 'difficulty' in languages is highly personal, and varies according to the point of view. While for an Italian the French language is easy, to a German it is certainly not. Proximity to the mother tongue and apprehension at a young age are elements that greatly change one's perspective and contribute to a personal view at the expense of objectivity.

Appendix

Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs.

Questionnaire among the population in 1998

Consciousness about *kanji* – Do you think that *kanji* are important and convenient?		
1	They are important and indispensable for the Japanese writing system	72.8%
2	They are convenient because by looking at them, one can immediately grasp the meaning	61.7%
3	It is indispensable to continue to learn *kanji* notwithstanding the significant use of electronic appliances like computers	52.0%
4	I do not have much confidence regarding the use of *kanji*	42.4%
5	*Kanji* are characters that make the Japanese writing system difficult	12.2%
6	I am confident in using *kanji*	11.9%
7	Due to the diffusion of computers, the need to write *kanji* will decrease	9.3%
8	Since it is difficult to learn *kanji*, it is better not to use them	3.7%

Questionnaire among the population in 2006

1.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="5">Do you consider the list of Jōyō kanji when writing?</th></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Consider</td><td colspan="2">Do not consider</td><td>Do not know</td></tr>
<tr><td>Consider</td><td>Somewhat consider</td><td>Do not consider very much</td><td>Do not consider at all</td><td rowspan="3">0.1%</td></tr>
<tr><td>19,2%</td><td>20.4%</td><td>37.6%</td><td>22.8%</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">39.6%</td><td colspan="2">60.3%</td></tr>
</table>

2.

Consideration of writing by means of computers and word processors		
In comparison to the questionnaire of the year 1995, do you think that the *kanji* that you have forgotten have increased?		
1	I have forgotten the way of writing many *kanji*	50.8%
2	I use many more *kanji* in sentences than before	42.9%
3	Since I need to use my eyes, I get tired easily	39.8%
4	I write sentences more quickly	38.9%
5	I find that it is easier to write sentences	33.4%
6	(I forgot) the reading and accents (of *kanji*)	24.5%
7	It takes more time to write sentences	9.8%
8	I have improved my ability in writing	7.5%

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Contemporary Japan
Challenges for a World Economic Power in Transition

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Japanese Language Learning through Authentic Materials
Insights from an Italian University Case Study

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Abstract This paper addresses a key issue in Applied Linguistics today: to what extent do copyright laws limit teaching and learning processes through authentic materials? Four surveys conducted in 2013 among Italian university students illustrate the fundamental role of online shared materials under copyright as a source and support for their motivation in Japanese language learning, showing how strong the conflict between students' practices/motivations and copyright laws still remains today.

Summary 1. Introduction. – 2. Authentic Materials and Digital Culture. – 3. «Needs of the Individual Learners in Their Social Context»: Four Surveys on Studying Japanese Language in Italy. – 4. Why Organise Authentic Materials in a Hypermedia Open Structure? – 5. From Copyright to Fair Use in Japanese Language Teaching and Learning. – 6. Conclusions and Open Issues.

1 Introduction

This paper will address a key issue in Applied Linguistics today: to what extent do copyright laws limit the teaching and learning processes through authentic material? Special emphasis will be given to Japanese Language teaching in Italy.

Furthermore, a second question will be addressed: do copyright and fair use[1] laws influence the spread of information about society, culture and languages in other countries, and, in so doing, reinforce motivation in language learning?

1 Fair use is a doctrine recognised in section 107 of US Code, title 17: «Notwithstanding the provisions of sections 106 (https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/17/106 [retrieved: 2015-06-22]) and 106A (https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/17/106A [retrieved: 2015-06-22]), the fair use of a copyrighted work, including such use by reproduction in copies or phonorecords or by any other means specified by that section, for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright».

I will review literature about applied linguistics and authentic materials as learning tools, and I will discuss the motivations causing college students in Italy to choose a university course in Japanese Studies, showing how strong the conflict between students' practices/motivations and copyright laws still remains today.

Finally, it will analyse how the above impact learners' use of an interactive hypermedia tool to study and enjoy Japanese grammar through authentic material that has been developed since 2008 (International Christian University, Tokyo, and Ca' Foscari University of Venice): BunpoHyDict.

2 Authentic Materials and Digital Culture

Since the 1960s, numerous studies – such as Baker's (1993), and more recently, with regard to Japanese Language teaching in Italy, Vitucci's (2013b) – have shown the results of Language Immersion and Content Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). As for the European Commision CLIL «involves teaching a curricular subject through the medium of a language other than that normally used» and it refers «to any dual-focused educational context in which an additional language, thus not usually the first language of the learners involved, is used as a medium in the teaching and learning of non-language content» (Marsh 2002, p. 2). For example, Vitucci (2013a) reports a CLIL case study about teaching Japanese History to undergraduate Japanese Language learners through documentaries in the Japanese Language.

As Marsh assesses,

> Since the 1990s, Europe amongst other continents, has witnessed a knowledge revolution in education resulting mainly from increasingly widespread access to **the Internet and the new technologies**. Some would argue that one effect of this on young people concerns the purposiveness of education and an increasing reluctance to postpone gratification. Teachers and others argue that some students are no longer willing to learn now for use later, which is a form of deferred purpose, but prefer **to learn as you use** and **use as you learn** which suits the immediacy of purpose common to the times. One of the success factors reported of CLIL/EMILE is the immediacy of purpose, which is positively acknowledged by young people. (Marsh 2002, p. 66, emphasis by the Author)

CLIL is therefore closely connected to the use of authentic material and samples of a target society for foreign and second language learning and teaching purposes. Bearing in mind that «the major concern is about education, not about becoming bi- or multilingual» (Marsh 2002, p. 24).

As Smith (1997) points out in minute detail the importance of using authentic materials (*realia* included) to teach a foreign language is well known and widely studied (Heaton 1979; Berwald 1987; Rivers 1983; Short 1991; Walz 1986; Kokusai Koryū Kikin 2006, 2008; Vitucci 2013a, 2013b).

In this paper we will adopt the following definitions by Nunan and Miller (1995) to identify 'authentic materials':

- Resources, both written and oral, created by native speakers of the target language for native speakers of the target language.
- Items not created or edited expressly for language learners.
- As the above-mentioned authors have demonstrated, using authentic material to approach a foreign language usually brings the following positive aspects:
- it connects the classroom and the learning activities **to the 'real' world** (bridging the 'inside' and the 'outside' of the classroom);
- it facilitates a **concrete experience** in the target culture and language;
- it holistically stimulates the learner by involving **different kind of cognitive styles** (visual, audio/verbal, kinaesthetic, tactile – included 'touching a device');
- it meets the **different kinds** of foreign language **acquisition methods** (Felder, Silvermann 2002);
- its use of authentic visual and verbal (written or spoken words) material **facilitates retention of new inputs**, since «students retain 10 per cent of what they read, 26 per cent of what they hear, 30 per cent of what they see, 50 per cent of what they see and hear, 70 per cent of what they say, and 90 per cent of what they say as they do something» (Felder, Silvermann 1988, p. 677, emphasis by the Author).

By the 1980s, the Cognitive Approach focussing on 'the learner as the subject' flourished in communicative approaches and constructivism theories such as the Humanistic-Affective theory focussing on the learner's emotions and the memory processes of the human brain (Krashen 1985; Balboni 2002).

The twenty-first century has been called the Standards' Era (Hosokawa 2012), passing through the American National Standard (2000), the Common European Framework of Reference (*Council of Europe* 2002), and the Japan Foundation Standard (2010). With regard to the 'learner as the subject' the Common European Framework of Reference states:

> It has been a fundamental methodological principle of the Council of Europe that the **methods to be employed** in language learning, teaching and research are those **considered to be most effective in reaching the objectives agreed in the light of the needs of the individual learners in their social context**. Effectiveness is contingent on the motivations

> and characteristics of the learners as well as the nature of the human and material resources, which can be brought into play. Following this fundamental principle through necessarily results in **a great diversity of objectives and an even greater diversity of methods and materials**. (Council of Europe 2002, p. 165, emphasis by the Author).

The principle of 'learner as the subject', and the hopefully long-term acquisition of the target foreign language that should result from it, are further supported by the immense variety of authentic materials that the Internet and new technologies offer to Lifelong Language Learners today, and matches the new trend of our Digital Culture, based on sharing and co-creating (Cammaerts, Mansell, Meng 2013).

3 «Needs of the Individual Learners in Their Social Context»: Four Surveys on Studying Japanese Language in Italy

Chavez' survey about students' attitudes towards authentic materials pointed out that «learners view authentic materials as essential to language learning and enjoyable. In contrast, positive correlations between authenticity and perceived difficulty were rare» (Chavez 1998, p. 277-306). As we turn to surveys on Japanese language learners in Italy, we find out that they confirm Chavez' findings to such an extent so that their learning of the language usually 'starts' with the authentic material itself, and perfectly embodies CEFR's fundamental principle urging teachers to meet the needs of the individual learners in their social context.

As a first finding, we can highlight that learners are constantly embedded 'in their social context' since early childhood, that is, they grow up among others, listening to music from all over the world, and, as far as Italy is concerned, they are widely exposed to Japanese videogames, and especially animation mainly dubbed into Italian on TV, looking for the beloved original ending/opening theme song on the Net. This passion is so strong that learners are not drawn to authentic materials through their desire to learn the Japanese language, but vice versa: 'from their childhood onward' their growing passion for this kind of Japanese popular culture inspires them to look for 'authentic materials' and leads them to study the Japanese language. According to Pellitteri (2010), Italy holds the world primacy of being the country with the highest number of anime series broadcast on TV outside Japan since the late 1970s. It is safe to say that, at present, almost all Italians aged under 40 have been completely immersed and encultured in a transmedia environment, animated by the constellation of Japanese popular cultures (Miyake 2012).

To verify the fundamental role played by authentic material in enhancing motivations in language learning, in 2013 we conducted four kinds of surveys among Japanese language students, most of whom attending the Department of Asian and North African Studies (DSAAM), Ca' Foscari University of Venice. At present the DSAAM offers the most popular Japanese language courses in Italy, with a total of over 1800 students of the Japanese language.

Survey A and B were handed out in the classroom. Answers were completely anonymous. Participants were:

- 305 first-year undergraduate students (Survey A);
- 28 second-year MA graduate students (Survey B).

Two further surveys were conducted online:

- through the Toluna Quick Surveys web site (`https://it.quicksurveys.com/TolunaAnalytics/Report?token=Fi0/SDQIirykyXwVnMW1FL2lHsSfZf7QjD/6waltrb8=`). As of 25 October 2013, 177 participants had been reached through Facebook, 168 of whom (94,7%) had studied Japanese language at high schools, university or by themselves (Survey C);
- through Google Form, 3rd-year undergraduate students attending Business Japanese classes at the DSAAM. Respondents were 32 of 120 students enrolled on the course (Survey D).

The above surveys showed how Japanese language learners mainly enrol for a Japanese Studies degree because they are motivated by a strong passion.

When asked, «Why did you enrol in this Japanese Language Course?» (free answer, analysed as multiple response, sum >100%), 1st-year undergraduate respondents to Survey A tended to base their motivation upon emotional reasons, that is, their **passion** (mostly 'since I was a child') for:

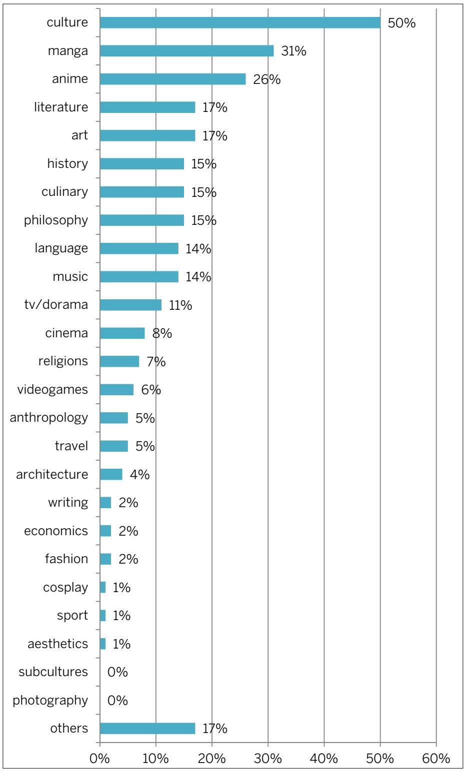
- a different culture (57% Survey A; 54% Survey B);
- Japanese language (36% Survey A; 32% Survey B);
- Japan (24% Survey A; 14% Survey B);
- languages (14% Survey A and B);
- more explicitly, curiosity born from anime, manga and *dorama* (6% Survey A; 4% in Survey B).

Interestingly, only 10% (7% in Survey B) also took into consideration a future job or the 'strong' Japanese economy (4% Survey A, 2% Survey B). On the contrary, if asked «What are your future projects linked to Japan?» (free answer, analysed as multiple choice, ≤100%), 86.5% (82% in Survey B) answered that they would like to work in/with Japan/the Japanese language, while only 5% answered «Living in Japan» without mentioning working there, 4,6% «I don't know», 3,2% «Deepen my knowledge of Japanese culture», and 0,5% (14% in Survey B) «Doing research, art».

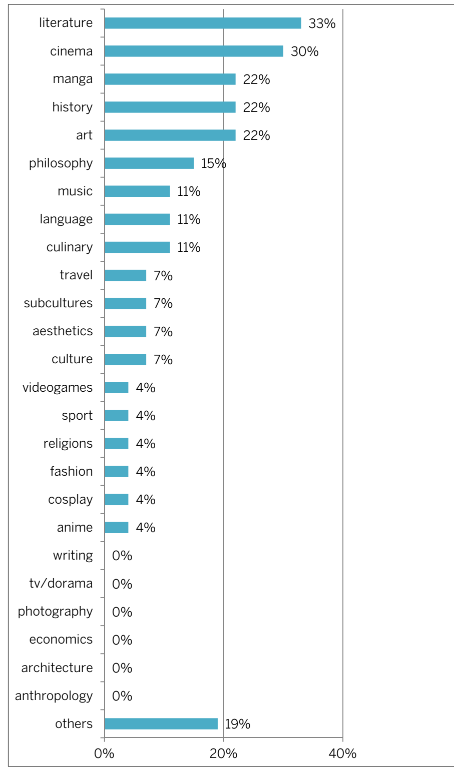
So, where did the motivating 'passion' come from? We can find some hints in the most frequent multiple responses about:

a. learners' interests in Japan (Graphs. 1-2);
b. the tools used by learners to study outside the classroom (Graphs. 3-4).

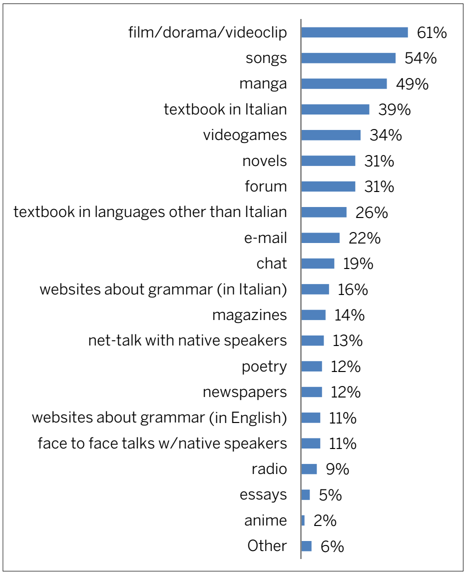
Graphic 1. «What interests you about Japan?» (1st-year BA respondents, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy, 2013)



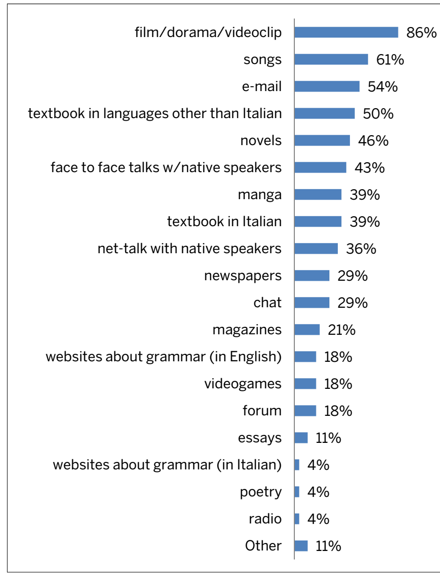
Graphic 2. «What interests you about Japan?» (2nd-year MA respondents, Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy, 2013)



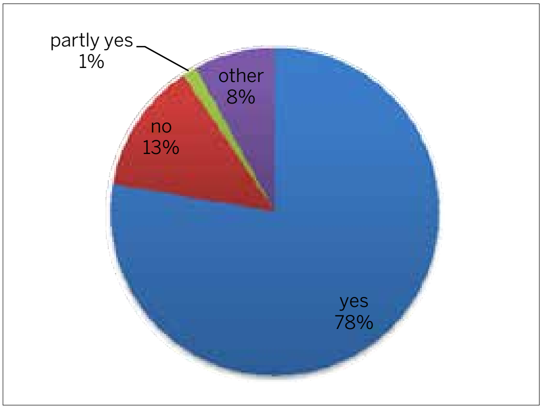
Graphic 3. «Which tools do you use to study the Japanese language outside the classroom?» (1st-year BA)



Graphic 4. «Which tools do you use to study the Japanese language outside the classroom?» (2nd-year MA)



In Graphics 1 and 2 general 'culture' only surpasses manga and anime (second and third position, respectively) as a motivating passion for studying the Japanese language for 1st-year BA students, while 2nd-year MA students, after five years attending university courses, recognise literature and cinema (although it would be hard to say if this includes anime or not) as most interesting, followed by manga. It must be highlighted that 78% of both 1st-year BA and 2nd-year MA respondents (268), consider manga and anime 'culture' (Graph. 5). It is hard to distinguish if the reply 'culture' given by 50% of 1st-year BA students to the question «What interests you about Japan?» (free response, Graph. 1. also included 'manga and anime'. Still it clearly shows how manga, anime and films occupy the highest positions, and constitute the main interests regarding Japan for both 1st-year BA students as well as 2nd-year MA students.



Graphic 5. «Do you consider manga and anime 'culture'?» (% calculated on respondents only: 264)

Graphics 3 and 4, show the importance that copyrighted audio-visual materials such as *dorama*, movies, anime (61% 1st-year BA; 84% 2nd-year MA), songs (54%; 61%) and manga (39%; 49%) assume for Japanese language learners in Italy today.

This is evident too, if we consider that a part of 1st-year BA students are already acquainted with the social context they will study, given their autonomous experiences of searching for the original versions of their beloved anime/manga online (56% utilises fansub/fandub sites) and of translating manga (10%) or anime (6%). Furthermore, this passion for contemporary Japanese popular culture is continuously re-kindled by their desire to view the latest episode of an ongoing anime or *dorama* series as soon as possible, be it with English subtitles (usually faster to get than Italian ones), or only in the original Japanese version, sometimes with Japanese subtitles. So anime, manga or *dorama* are instrumental not only to Japanese (or Korean) language studies, but to some extent to the study of the English language as well.

In 2011, there were more than 120 FanSub websites in Italy (Mariotti, 2011b), while as of October 2013 *Animewiki* listed 161 FanSub webpages dedicated to Japanese animation, of which only 70 appear to be active, each releasing at least 1 file since February 2013.

A FanSub group is based on different kinds of activities: translation, timing, encoding, adaptation, checkers and more. It is part of a much wider community which, thanks to its 'social energy' and 'collaborative creativity' (Condry, 2013), involves hundreds of fans registered in forums dedicated to popular culture (for example, Initial D FanSub, `http://initialdfansub.forumcommunity.net/` [retrieved: 2015-06-22], has about 750 registered members as of October 2013).

While the following are merely informed guesses, we can nevertheless assume that the students' strong passion depicted above fades during subsequent years of study (compare Graph. 1 and Graph. 2 as well), probably because they have acquired a wider knowledge of other aspects of Japanese culture, but more realistically, due to their inferiority complex towards their peers who may prefer what is still considered 'high culture' in Italy as, often identified as literature, art and philosophy. Contemporary Japanese popular culture is still stigmatised as being childish, superficial or merely commercial, and this usually results in a loss of motivation in overcoming the hardship of the following years of studies.

From the results of the above surveys, it seems that learners have already chosen the contents that will sustain their motivation (music, movies, *dorama*, anime, manga, videogame, literature). What the twenty-first century 'critical pedagogue' needs to do then is to find an appropriate way to organise (and let/help learners organise) those popular culture-oriented motivations in an elastic/personalisable structure designed to follow through the CEFR fundamental principle that the **methods to be employed** in language learning, teaching and research are those **considered to be the most effective in reaching the objectives agreed in the light of the needs of the individual learners in their social context**.

A tool such as the Hypermedia Dictionary of Japanese Grammar or BunpoHyDict (`http://www.bunophydict.com/`, password required) may be a particularly effective tool for studying/using the Japanese language given the above-mentioned principles and social contexts of young learners. BunpoHydict is an ongoing website interface project[2] that is modelled on the motivational priorities of Japanese language learners (Graphs. 1 and 2), who already base their concrete and spontaneous approach to the Japanese language on these motivations (Graphs. 3 and 4).

Moreover, selected authentic materials organised in a hypertext structure are particularly effective in favouring a more complex and nuanced approach to the Japanese language, culture and society. For instance, it may be used to:

1. 'get in touch' with a wide range of multi-media materials from different cultures;
2. recall enjoyable shared and personal experiences such as 'childhood anime';
3. become more sensitive to isomorphisms between one's own culture and that of others, as a result of points 1 and 2, in order to avoid dichotomic essentialism.

2 BunpoHyDict project started from my Ph.D. thesis, and has been implemented thanks to the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Post-doc fellowship (2008-2010) at International Christian University (Tokyo), to the support of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan, and, since 2011, to the volunteering and passionate collaboration of more than 20 Japanese language MA students of Ca' Foscari University of Venice, to whom I owe my sincere gratitude. Credits are listed at `http://www.bunpohydict.com/`.

4 Why Organise Authentic Materials in a Hypermedia Open Structure?

Theodore Nelson coined the term 'hypertext' to describe a nonlinear form of writing: «text that branches and allows choices to the reader» (Nelson, 1981, p. 2). Here hypermedia is understood as a «hypertext system that links various media (pictures, sound, [video] etc.) as well as written text per se» (ibidem). The linking of 'meaningful' nodes that allow the user/reader to jump from an information data to another one has been often compared to the way human brain works (Bush 1945, Landow 2006, White 2007). As White (2007) argues, hypermedia has been closely associated with postmodernism, constructivism and democratic learning.

Broadly addressed as 'hypertext' as well, hypermedia real effectiveness has long been debated (Shapiro, Niederhauser 2004, White 2007). In fact, while it offers instant access to different kinds of data, permitting a personal approach to the object of study, it may lead the learner to get 'lost in hyperspace'. However, as Theng, Jones and Thimbleby (1996) suggest, disorientation is not only caused by the learner's use of a hypertext, but may mostly be due to bad design. Fratter (2004, p. 26) offers a clear table of hypertext shortcomings together with some possible solutions, mainly represented by a 'well structured map' of the site and a 'guided path'.

«A great diversity of objectives and an even greater diversity of methods and materials» must be sought out if we want to follow the CFER principle «that the **methods to be employed** in language learning, teaching and research are those **considered to be most effective in reaching the objectives agreed in the light of the needs of the individual learners in their social context**» (Council of Europe 2002, p. 165, emphasis by the Author).

Hypermedia and hypertext then seem to be an appropriate system to link together authentic materials that stimulate visual, audio/verbal, kinaesthetic, and tactile experiences. Teaching a language through such a system allows learners to follow their own motivation and create a personal path towards the target society, culture and language.

An experimental version of such a system applied to Japanese language teaching and learning is the above-mentioned BunpoHyDict platform, which is thought to help learners and teachers of Japanese (for a detailed discussion, see Mariotti, 2011a; Mariotti, Mantelli 2012).

The BunpoHyDict interface allows learners to:

- choose a visual or verbal *realia* from those suggested in the video/pictures albums, and jump to the dedicated page of every single grammatical item presented by the selected *realia* by clicking on the specific highlighted word in the transcript;
- start learning by beginning with their own interests (a song, an anime…) and consulting the main page of each grammar item they want to study;

- choose a video or a picture that includes a grammar item that the teacher has been explaining in the classroom;
- follow a learning path decided by the teacher.

5 From Copyright to Fair Use in Japanese Language Teaching and Learning

The findings of chap. 2 and the relevance of hypermedia structure explained in para. 3, clearly show that an overtly strict understanding of **copyright laws may strongly limit the teaching and learning processes of Japanese language.** For a non-working student it is neither easy nor cheap to buy the copyrighted authentic materials he/she is interested in as shown in Graphics 1 and 2. The main tools learners lean on to deepen their knowledge of Japanese language are copyrighted material rarely distributed in Italy or quite expensive to import from Japan. Accordingly, it can be argued that strictly applying copyright laws and closing up Fansub/dub sites would strongly limit learners' interest in Japanese culture and their prospects of improvement in Japanese language proficiency. Moreover, since such authentic copyrighted audio-visual materials are often the source of the motivation or passion for Japanese language and culture (as seen in para. 1), it may well be supposed that limiting access to authentic audio-visual material would also result in a decrease or loss of interest in the Japanese language for a great number of learners. That is to say, **copyright and fair use laws influence the spread of information about society, culture and languages** in other countries, and, in so doing, fair use can **reinforce motivation** in language learning.

The Italian Copyright Law is aware of this and therefore allows diffusion of «fragments or quotations for criticism, discussion, or non-commercial teaching or research (with source indicated)» (art. 70.1), and «the communication of low-resolution images and music over the Internet for educational or scientific purposes» (art. 70.1-bis) (Copyright Law of Italy, `http://www.interlex.it/testi/l41_633.htm#70` [retrieved: 2015-06-22]).

In order to preserve academic research from being 'subjugated to cultural industries', as legal theorist Lessig and Richter (Richter 2011, p. 138) suggest, and to promote public education guaranteeing study, criticism and free speech (Intellectual Property Conference of Stockholm 1967), the Japanese Copyright Law (`http://www.japaneselawtranslation.go.jp/law/detail/?ft=1&re=02&dn=1&x=-643&y=-317&co=01&ky=%E8%91%97%E4%BD%9C%E6%A8%A9&page=12` [retrieved: 2015-06-22]) also allows some use of copyrighted material:

> Article 32. It shall be permissible to quote from and thereby exploit a work already made public, provided that such quotation is compatible

> with fair practice and to the extent justified by the purpose of the quotation, such as news reporting, critique or research. (Trans. by Japanese Law Translation)

Tominaga (2009) denies the need for a Japanese edition of fair use, demonstrating how case laws show that the current Copyright Act functions to realize the concept of 'fairness' which every law in Japan inherently has.

Widely known and prize-winning websites such as *Teach with Movies* (US, since 1998), or the software and smartphone application *Chōjimaku* (Japan, distributed by Sourcenext, available at `http://www.sourcenext.com/product/pc/chj/pc_chj_000763/` [retrieved: 2015-06-17]), acknowledge the importance of teaching (not only languages) through authentic audiovisual materials like films. The first «provides Lesson Plans and Learning Guides based on feature films & movies, full length and snippets (video clips), for classes in English, Social Studies, Health, Science and the Arts» (`http://www.teachwithmovies.org/`), free of charge since August 2013; while the latter sells whole movies in English with English or Japanese subtitles in which words are linked to Japanese-English/English-Japanese dictionaries: although the word search does not include English grammar explanations.[3]

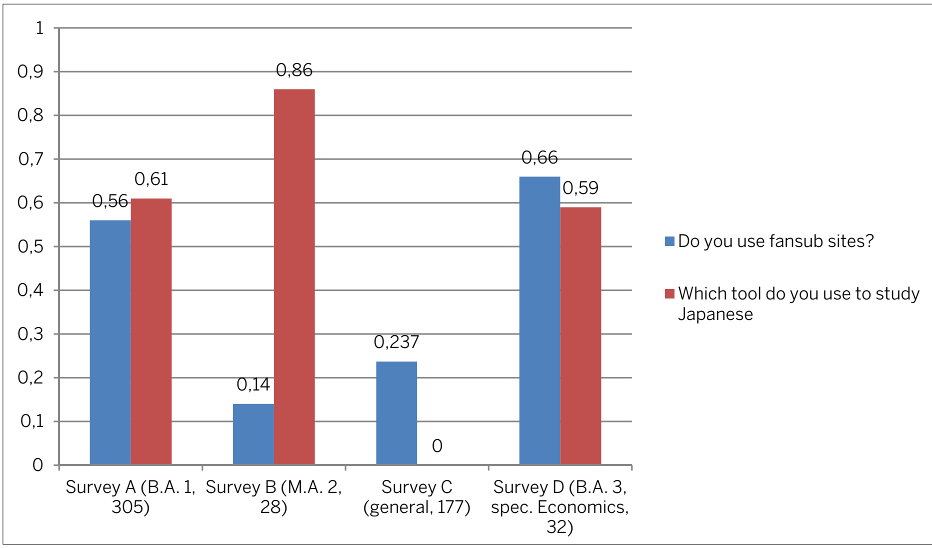
In Italy the first website that 'quotes' and makes available free authentic copyrighted materials for educational purposes is *Il cinema insegna: Formazione con i film* (Cinema Teaches: Pedagogy through Movies, since 2010), whose mission is to make people grow and develop. Thanks to a dedicated space for criticism and to its declared educational non-profit purposes, *Il cinema insegna* legally offers educational teaching/learning guidelines and films for free, selling others with a subscription of 380€/year.

Although market principles obviously support the 'buying and selling' of products even when for educational purposes, the great strength of Japanese, Korean and Chinese popular culture such as music, anime, manga and *dorama*, seems to 'follow the flow' of today's Digital Culture: channelling the passion of foreign language and culture learners into what Condry (2013) calls «social energy» and «collaborative creativity». Our surveys show how in Italy, Japanese language university students have already established a strong link between authentic copyrighted materials of Japanese popular cultures, on the one hand, and an approach to Japanese language and culture, on the other. A consistent number already uses or participates in 'fansub services': 56% (Survey A), 14% (Survey B), 24% (Survey C), 66% (Survey D). The majority makes regular use anime,

3 A Japanese website to learn English through movies for free is `http://www.yomukiku.com/` [retrieved: 2015-06-22].

manga and *dorama* to study the Japanese language: 61% (Survey A), 86% (Survey B), 59% (Survey D).[4]

Graphic 6. Using authentic materials



6 Conclusions and Open Issues

The use that foreign language learners make of copyrighted materials resembles what Brown and Adler called 'social learning'. That is, informal group learning on- and off-campus recalling the Open Educational Resources (OER) policy supported by UNESCO and, since September 2013, by the European Commission too.

«Social learning is based on the premise that our *understanding* of content is socially constructed through **conversations about** that content and through **grounded interactions**, especially with others, around problems» . No more Cartesian «I think therefore I am» but «We participate, therefore we are» (Brown, Adler 2008, p. 18, emphasis by the Author).

> viewing learning as the process of joining a community of practice reverses this [Cartesian 'learn a subject before being a practitioner'] pat-

4 As suggested by the 22,907 'likes' in only 2 years of the Facebook social group *Itastreaming* (dedicated to unlicensed anime subtitled in Italian), the community participating in sharing and viewing Japanese anime is extremely active. Available at `https://it-it.facebook.com/AnimeStreamingSubIta` (retrieved: 2015-06-22).

> tern and allows new students to engage in «learning to be» even as they are mastering the content of a field. This encourages the practice of what John Dewey called «productive inquiry» – that is, the process of seeking the knowledge when it is needed in order to carry out a particular situated task [...] The world is evolving at an increasing pace. [...] We now need a new approach to learning – one characterized by a demand- pull rather than the traditional supply-push mode. (Brown, Adler 2008, p. 30)

The figures presented in this paper strongly suggest that Japanese language learning in Italy (as in other parts of the developed world) is today characterised by a «demand- pull mode». Cammaerts and Meng (2011) have examined online copyright infringements, and have demonstrated that «providing user-friendly, hassle-free solutions to enable users to download music legally at a reasonable price, is a much more effective strategy for enforcing copyright than a heavy-handed legislative and regulatory regime» (Cammaerts, Meng 2011, p. 2). Cammaerts, Meng and Mansell (2013) also stress:

> that new business models are enabling the industry to gain advantage by building on a digital culture based on sharing and co-creating. [...] The marketing benefits and sales boosts arising from the sharing of films online are starting to be seen as compensating for losses in revenue due to infringing sharing, is thriving on ubiquitous digital content sharing. For instance the 10 million user generated videos of Gangnam Style by South-Korean musician PSY on YouTube demonstrate how attractive and vibrant the online sharing culture has become (Cammaerts, Meng, Mansell 2013, p. 10).

The open issue then is: South Korea amended its Copyright Act in 2012 to include fair-use, and its popular cultures are widely available on YouTube-like websites that allow «reading and discussion» under a non-for-profit Creative Commons license.[5] The China Copyright Act (2010 amend, sec.4 art. 22.) lists 12 examples of Limitation on Rights, the first two of which concern research and discussion of a work. In other words, unlike Japanese popular cultures, Chinese and South Korean popular cultures not only gain an advantage «by building on a digital culture based on sharing and co-creating», but they also benefit from recent legal amendments, which are strategic in implementing international interest in their cultures and languages.

5 See: *Korean Drama*, `http://www.koreandrama.org/` [retrieved: 2015-06-22]; *DramaFever*, `http://www.dramafever.com/press/articles/dramafever-recognized-as-industry-leader-by-south-korean-government/` [retrieved: 2015-06-22].

Will Japan move with the times, capitalising on, and literally making available, its worldwide acclaimed **cool** popular cultures to enable a more 'social' and 'demand-pool mode' of Japanese language learning?

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Contemporary Japan
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Japanese Sociolinguistics
A Critical Review and Outlook

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Abstract Sociolinguistic research in Japan predates the start of this tradition in Europe and in the US. The Japanese reception of Western works of sociolinguistics was therefore never simply a process of introducing and applying frameworks developed outside Japan. Up to today, Japanese approaches developed before the introduction of European and US sociolinguistics continue to remain much of their currency in Japan, in particular with regard to the epistemology about the relation between language and society in Japan. As a result, foreign and indigenous approaches rarely resulted in a new symbiosis but continue to exist side by side. Furthermore, as an effect of neglecting specific issues in sociolinguistic research, a new interdisciplinary approach to issues pertaining to language and society in Japan has evolved in the past 20 years. This paper traces the development of Japanese sociolinguistics over the past 80 years, reports on the latest developments and initiatives, identifies research topics in which the Japanese traditions have excelled, and points out to topics were more concentrated efforts are desirable henceforth.

Summary 1. Introduction. – 2. Mainstream Sociolinguistics. – 3. Formative Background of Mainstream Sociolinguistics. – 4. Interdisciplinary Sociolinguistics. – 5. Outlook.

1 Introduction

The establishment of sociolinguistic research in Japan predates the establishment of the tradition in the US and Europe by at least four decades. Sociolinguistic research thus stands as one example for the innovative forte of Japanese scholarship. Yet, due to 1. the limited research objects of the Japanese indigenous sociolinguistic tradition, 2. the biased reception of Western works of sociolinguistics and 3. the criticism on sociolinguistic research from neighbouring fields of research, the study of sociolinguistics in Japan also sheds light on a. the circumstances in which academic research has been carried out, b. the ideological influences which have shaped sociolinguistic research and c. the results Japanese sociolinguistics has produced. By examining how Japanese sociolinguistics evolved therefore allows also for insights about Japanese society at large. Note in this context, that research fields and methodology of sociolinguistics have also been examined, challenged and expanded outside Japan. Now and again, a critical view on the field is taken (see e.g. Smakman, Heinrich 2015), and much of what is critically discussed here for the case of Japanese sociolinguistics holds also true for sociolinguistics outside of Japan (see e.g. Rickford 1997; Henrich, Heine, Norenzayan 2010).

In order to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of current research trends in Japanese sociolinguistics and the tension between what we call here 'mainstream sociolinguistics' and 'interdisciplinary sociolinguistics', we will discuss the developments of the two traditions separately. A comprehensive understanding of Japanese sociolinguistic research requires also a disassociation of Japanese state ideology which stresses linguistic, cultural and historical unity back to an ancient past. However, as an effect of its modernization in the late nineteenth century, Japan has colonialized surrounding territories for many decades and this has led to considerable changes with regards to the state borders of Japan. What was to become part of the Japanese nation-state and what was to become a colony of Japan hinged on a simple date, 29 November 1890, the day when the Meiji Constitution was enacted. All territories on which Japanese rule was expanded before that date became part of 'Japan proper' (i.e. Ainu Mosir/Hokkaido, the Ryūkyū Islands and the Ogasawara Islands), while those territories where Japanese rule was extended afterwards became colonies (Iriye 1970; Heinrich 2014). Japan as discussed in this chapter refers to islands from Ainu Mosir southwards until the southwest of the Ryūkyū Islands, that is, it includes indigenous ethnolinguistic minorities.

In Japan, standard Japanese is the dominant language and the de facto official language. With more than 100 million first and second language speakers, Japanese is one of the ten largest languages in the world. As an effect of urbanization and the influence of mass media, extensive dialect levelling has occurred. Language shift to (standard) Japanese and other varieties of Japanese has led to the endangerment of the regional languages Ainu, Hachijō and the Ryūkyūan languages (Moseley 2009). Japanese, Hachijō and the Ryūkyūan languages form the Japonic language family (Pellard 2015). Ainu is a language isolate.

2 Mainstream Sociolinguistics

It is not easy to determine the scope or range of sociolinguistics in Japan. The difficulty is already evident in the entry *shakai gengogaku* (sociolinguistics) in the Japanese version of Wikipedia (cf. «Shakai gengogaku» 2014) which states:

> At the present the range of study conducted under the label sociolinguistics is very diverse, making it difficult to define sociolinguistics in

a straightforward way. This situation is for example reflected in the fact that there exists no 'Sociolinguistic Society' in Japan.

External links:

- *Shakai gengo kagakkai* (The Association of Sociolinguistic Sciences);
- *Tagengo shakai kenkyūkai* (Multilingual Society Research Society);
- *'Shakai gengogaku' kankōkai* (Sociolinguistics Publication Society);
- *Tagengo-ka genshō kenkyūkai* (Research Society for Multilingual Transformation Phenomena);
- *Nihon gengo seisaku gakkai* (Japanese Association for Language Policy).

It is safe to say that the societies listed in Wikipedia are the most important associations for Japanese sociolinguistics. At the same time, some sort of comprehensive national society covering the entire field does not exist. This notwithstanding, books featuring 'sociolinguistics' in their title abound. The term is also often used in neighbouring disciplines. Yet, with the sole exception of the Sociolinguistics Publication Society, no academic body listed in Wikipedia uses 'sociolinguistics' in its name. This results from the fact that a large part of linguistic research in Japan exceeds the usual confines of the field usually encapsulated under the term 'sociolinguistics'.

A series of bibliographies on sociolinguistic research in Japan by Sanada and Sibata (1982) and Sanada (1989-2000) identifies nine prominent fields of research:

1. Methodology;
2. Social variables and language (age, gender and also group language, etc.);
3. Language behaviour (contextual code choice, honorific language use, communication behaviour, etc.);
4. Language life (life environment and language, naming, etc.);
5. Language contact (dialect and standard language, loan words, diglossia, etc.);
6. Language change (language standardization process, neo-dialects, migration and language, etc.);
7. Language attitudes (language norms, identity, discriminatory language, etc.);
8. Language learning (second language learning, inter-language, etc.);
9. Language planning (national language and script reform, Japanese-as-a-foreign language, etc.).

This classification was inductively built on the basis of almost 1,000 publications. Let us briefly consider these categories, setting aside the case of methodology. To start, it is striking that only language planning is devoted to macro phenomena. It may also be controversial to which extent second language learning qualifies as a genuine sociolinguistic topic. *Gengo seikatsu* (language life) is a category not existing in Western scholarship. *Kokugo kokuji mondai* (national language and script reform), finally, originates from the complexity of the Japanese writing system. The incessant interest in language reform is something particular to sociolinguistics in Japan. Note, by the way, that the compilation of the bibliography is not without problems either. Sakurai (2007, p. 26) has a point in writing that «when collecting [sociolinguistic] research literature, one will inevitably be aware of selective criteria, deciding what counts as sociolinguistic research», which is why one is «at risk to restrict the scope of sociolinguistics from the very start». This may explain why research on language planning and policy omits Japanese language spread in the colonies, despite the fact that insights gained there crucially shaped post-war Japanese linguistics. This notwithstanding, important work on this period by scholars such as Toyoda (1968), Lee (1996) or Yasuda (1997) is not regarded to be part of mainstream sociolinguistics.

The bibliographies by Sanada and Sibata (1992) and Sanada (1989-2000) give thus a biased overview, resulting in a narrow portray of sociolinguistics (Sakurai 2007, pp. 25-26). Hara (2007, p. 12), for that matter, writes that «until ten years or so ago sociolinguistics was tantamount to dialectology». Of course regional dialects have always been a central field of sociolinguistics. The point here is that mainstream sociolinguistics in Japan was for a long time conducted exclusively by trained dialectologists. It is no coincidence that mainstream sociolinguistics such as Sibata Takesi all published also works on dialectology (e.g. Sibata 1958). It is also not accidental that *hōgengaku* (dialectology) and *hōgen chirigaku* (language geography) were initially ubiquitous keywords in the journal of The Association of Sociolinguistic Sciences (e.g. Shibuya 2000, Kobayashi 2000). Note also that the first president of this society was the seminal dialectologist Tokugawa Munemasa.

Yanagita Kunio's (1930) pioneering study on the geographic distributions of words referring to 'slug', and the research for the selection of a standard variety of Japanese by the pre-war *Kokugo chōsa iinkai* (National Language Research Council) had huge influence on the development of postwar sociolinguistics. The influence can most prominently be found in the research conducted at the *Kokuritsu kokugo kenkyūjo* (National Institute of Japanese Language and Linguistics). This tradition can also be traced in more recent research initiatives on what is called *shin-hōgen* (new dialects) or *neo-dairekuto* (neo-dialects) (see e.g. Inoue 1985; Satō 1993). These studies focus on newly coined expressions of locality by the young generation. This topic is also explored in research on *yakuwarigo* (role language) and its geolinguistic variant called *hōgen kosupure* (dialect cosplay) (Kinsui 2003, Tanaka 2011).

Despite the fact that mainstream Japanese sociolinguistics conducted a large number of studies on language varieties, including studies on spoken and written ‘women’s language’ or domains and contexts of honorific language use etc., it ignored the study of social dialects or linguistic minorities. Despite the reception of Western sociolinguistics introducing research on social stratification in urban centers, segregated minority settlements in cities, or code-switching by migrants these issues were not explored in the case of Japan. This was not due to the fact that such issues are non-existent. Such neglect was the consequence of Japanese academia refraining from addressing politically charged issues. This also included an avoidance of a critical self-reflection on the ideological basis of Japanese sociolinguistics itself.

As an effect, there exists a need to address a number of research gaps in Japanese sociolinguistics. For example, the claim that *kyōtsūgo* (common standard Japanese) basically equates to the norm of *hyōjungo* (standard Japanese) spoken in the Tokyo area has never been contested. Rather, studies on this issue aimed from the start to verify this view through research. Despite the linguistic distance between the Tokyo dialect and common standard Japanese, no research was conducted why adapting the norms of common standard Japanese was seen as ‘desirable’ there. Barely any research on the standardization process in Tokyo exists, even though the National Institute of Japanese Language and Linguistics focused for many years on the study of standardization (see e.g. Kokuritsu Kokugo Kenkyūjo 1950, 1953). From the very start of modern linguistics in Japan, more or less the same ideology emphasizing and promoting linguistic homogeneity has been upheld. Nonconformity to such stance has been rare. One such example is a debate in 1940-1941 whether standard Japanese language spread in the Ryūkyū Islands necessitated the eradication of the indigenous Ryūkyūan languages or not (see Heinrich 2013).

Since its inception, language geographical research collected data necessary for standard Japanese language spread. Along the lines of national language ideology, created and spread in the Meiji period (1868-1912), language geographical research projects after WWII also sought to confirm the unbroken continuity of ‘national language’ in the Japanese Archipelago. This included efforts of linking present-day Japanese to Old Japanese and to Proto-Japanese. Hence, the dominant paradigm under which Ryūkyūan languages were studied was that of ‘Okinawan dialects’ or ‘Ryūkyū dialects’. The Ryūkyūan languages were not studied as a minority language but as epiphenomena of Japanese. This approach still asserts much influence in Japanese linguistics, including mainstream sociolinguistics (see Masiko 2014).

Studies in language planning and policy were preoccupied with written language reform, the relation between standard Japanese and regional dialects, honorific language, and English language education, despite the fact that a wider spectrum of possible topics exists. Such restriction in research is the effect of a view that multilingualism no longer existed in the Japan after the loss of its colonies (see Oguma 2002). Accordingly, the range of topics became restricted to 'the Japanese Archipelago as a monolingual space' or to 'teaching English as a means to deal with international contexts'. Both language geography and language life are basically the products of such ideology. Former colonial subjects residing in Japan, migrants, expatriate children, Japanese linguistic minorities, mixed marriage families, etc. have never been studied within these fields. Mainstream sociolinguistic departed from a the view that everyone in Japan is Japanese, speaks Japanese, speaks Japanese as a first language, and speaks no other language except for communication to the outside world. In order to better understand such restriction, we need to examine the historical and ideological background from which mainstream sociolinguistics emerged.

3 Formative Background of Mainstream Sociolinguistics

Apart from Japan being the first country to form a modern nation state and to introduce modern science in Asia, it could also draw on a notable premodern tradition of linguistic research. Buddhist studies, the heritage of classical Chinese culture through Confucian studies, the philological work of the *kokugakusha* (Edo-nativists), and translations at the Court were the main sources of pre-modern linguistic studies. In particular the work of the Edo nativists found entry into modern linguistics. The introduction of Western linguistics to Japan was never simply a transfer of information (Heinrich 2002a). Rather, such information was adapted or transformed due to the following circumstances.

1. While linguistic research initially attempted to establish genealogical research of languages in and around the Japanese Archipelago following the model of the Indo-European language family, such ambition was set back by the fact that only the Ryūkyūan languages could be linked to Japanese (see Pellard 2015).

2. Western linguistics was applied to language planning in the colonies. It played an important role in efforts of linguistic assimilation. Participation in *kokugo-ka* (national languification) in the colonies became an important scholarly task. In concert with such attempts, the honorative system, 'women's language' etc., drew much attention as an effect of a language ideology maintaining that *nihon seishin* (the Japanese spirit) resided in the Japanese language. Such views were never entirely refuted after WWII (Ramsey 2004). They found entry into language education in school, including instruction in handwriting and calligraphy, and in studies on Japanese-as-a-foreign language or Japanese-as-a second language afterwards.

3. Being a modernization latecomer, Japan chose to have its elite studying the major European languages, but it also succeeded in standardizing its 'national language'. Hence, Japan did not experience the popular spread of a Western language. Instead of introducing a Western modernized lan-

guage for uses in higher domains, the language of the *yamato minzoku* (Yamato people), i.e. Japanese, was established as de facto official language and spread among neighbouring people, e.g. Ryūkyūans (Heinrich 2015), Ainu (DeChiccis 1995) and Ogasawarans (Long 2007). Initially, English language education was installed into the curriculum of secondary education and the study of all other languages limited to elite educational institutions. After WWII, English language education was further popularized. It was at this point that the view emerged that foreign language education was tantamount to English language education. This trend was further strengthened after the end of the Cold War.

4. In place of the frustrating attempts in historical comparative studies to link Japonic languages to a larger language family, efforts were made in gaining ever better insights into regional dialects, including their history. This trend was crucially enhanced after the loss of the colonies, and further accelerated by a sense of crisis due to ongoing dialect levelling. The legacy of dialectology in sociolinguistics survives today in research of *shin-hōgen* (new dialects) or *kyara hōgen* (character dialects).

5. Heightened interest in geographical and historical diversity along genealogical lines did not translate into interest with other forms of linguistic diversity. It was not accompanied by an interest for social dialects or for linguistic minorities. Lack of research into these fields was also not adjusted when works of Western sociolinguistics on these issues were introduced to Japan.

6. Before Western sociolinguistics was introduced, a research orientation called *gengo seikatsu* (language life) was established in Japan. Centered at the National Institute of Japanese Language and Linguistics, this approach exerted influence on Japanese mainstream sociolinguistics (Heinrich 2002b).

7. The adaptation of Chinese characters to Japanese resulted in complicated, unsystematic orthographic norms. Discussions of the pros and cons of restricting the characters in use was a major preoccupation in post-war language planning and policy studies (Carroll 2001). There exists a strong resistance to simplifying the writing system, and analysis and recommendations along the lines of sociolinguistic research are avoided here. The unquestioned image of Japanese being exclusively used by Japanese plays a role in such neglect.

Others have also noted specific characteristics of mainstream sociolinguistics. Sanada (2006, p. 1) for instance recalls that «it is not such a long time ago that the field of sociolinguistic research was established in Japan. […] It was on an early summer day in 1972 […] that I saw by accident a flyer of a presentation of the Dialectological Circle of Japan. Even today, I cannot forget the powerful impact this announcement had on me due to the fact that the subtitle read 'seeking a nexus between language and society'. […] Even though the term 'geography' existed in linguistic research at this time, ‘society’ did not. Seeking a connection to society was considered a taboo in linguistic research then».

Sanada gives an apt summary of the situation 40 year ago. Young researchers who played a key-role in the establishment of sociolinguistics in postwar Japan were relieved from an intellectual climate where ‘society’ was not part of linguists’ conceptual toolbox. Research into language variation before that was simply one of studying the distribution of linguistic features in physical space – a space devoid of society, i.e., social class, formal educational background, or cultural capital. It remains unclear, though, to what extent seeking a connection to society was considered a taboo in linguistic research, to what extent a concept of society was lacking, and to what extent researchers were under the influence of an imagined homogenous society and reproduced such ideology for the sake of maintaining public order.

Sanada’s retrospective coincided with the period of time when Joshua Fishman’s *The Sociology of Language* and Peter Trudgill’s *Sociolinguistics* were translated into Japanese. The later work included chapters titled ‘Language and social class’ and ‘Language and ethnic group’, research fields not established then in Japan. More noteworthy yet, this remained so for many more years. Both topics left no traces in the well-established ‘nine fields of sociolinguistics in Japan’ mentioned above. Japanese translations of Western works of sociolinguistics appeared now frequently. Dell Hymes (1974) *Foundations in Sociolinguistics* was translated in 1979, Hermann Bausinger (1972) *Deutsch für Deutsche* in 1982, Richard Hudson (1980) *Sociolinguistics* in 1988, James and Lesley Milroy (1985) *Authority in Language* in 1988, Brigitte Schlieben-Lange (1978) *Soziolinguistik* in 1990. Belief in the myth of a classless and mono-ethnic Japanese society had the effect that Western sociolinguistics left little influence on studies in Japan. The image of an exclusively middle-class society, a society in which everybody was equal under the Japanese emperor was the legacy of pre-war ideology. It was the product of the right-wing dogma *ikkun banmin* (one lord, the whole nation). It completely ignored minorities such as Korean residents, Ainu, Ryūkyūan or Ogasawaran Islanders. That generative linguistics, which neglects social and historical aspects of language, was then the ruling paradigm certainly helped maintaining an illusion of linguistic homogeneity in Japanese linguistics. It is nevertheless probably appropriate to state that a considerable number of Japanese linguists purposefully avoided addressing controversial subjects such as social class, migrants, or minorities.

In an intellectual climate where exploring the relationship between language and society was a taboo, issues whether settlement patterns during the rampant urbanization reflected social class, what such patterns implied for language, whether different regional patters of language standardization across the country impacted on social mobility and academic achievements were never addressed. This conservative and essentialist stance remained unchanged even after the translation of Western works of sociolinguistics which could have paved the way for such an expansion of research. The oblivion of the multiethnic and multilingual make-up of the Japanese Archipelago (Denoon, Hudson, McCormack, Morris-Suzuki 1996), and in particular the institutional structures suppressing critical self-reflection, provided for an intellectual climate where sociolinguistic research could not further expand.

There were exceptions to this trend. One such example is the research of Nakamura Momoko who was crucially influenced both by Tanaka Katsuhiko's work which strongly attacked the conservatism of Japanese linguistics and introduced new European theoretical concepts (e.g. Tanaka 1981, 1983) and by Lakoff's (1975) work on gender such as *Language and Woman's Place* (translated into Japanese by Katsue Reynolds). The study of linguistic politeness, crucially inspired by the reception of works by Brown and Levinson (1987) is another example of sociolinguistic expansion. Note however that in the second example the idea of Japanese cultural exceptionalism was strengthened, rather than being challenged or transformed.

There were limits for the expansion of the indigenous tradition of language life, too. In addressing «the relationship between life and language» but by not being «academically precise» (Sanada 2006, p. 74), a generalization of its results and the representativeness of its data had been doubtful from the start. Such restrictions notwithstanding, studies like the *Gengo seikatsu nijūyon jikan chōsa* (24-hour Survey of Language Life) were effective examples in building theories of medium range. In so doing, they have been helpful for the formulation of new research questions. Note however that research such as the 24-hour survey could only be accomplished in the Japan of the past, where strict notions of privacy did not exist. Given our views on research ethics today, it is doubtful that such studies could be repeated or developed. Also, since any informant agreeing to participate in such type of research would inevitably occupy a specific social position within society, it is questionable to what extent sociolinguistic generalizations can be drawn from such data collection.

The complex writing system could have led to an expansion of sociolinguistics, too. However, while sociological research on migrants pointed out that the existing writing system amounted to barriers in the occupational field and also obstructed the educational success of migrant children, the reaction of linguistics to such problems has been lethargic at best (Galan 2005). Despite the fact that research into writing system and orthography is remarkably productive in Japan (for an overview, see Galan, Fijalkow 2006), it rarely addressed the problems newly arrived migrants had with it. As a result, even in pedagogical research on migrant children or children with disabilities, the main emphasis remains how to best mainstream them to the existing norms of writing. Questioning the appropriateness of such norms and possible ways of changing them has been avoided.

So far, we have mainly discussed the conservative intellectual climate surrounding the study of sociolinguistics in Japan. Under the influence of works by scholars such as Tanaka or Nakamura, there emerged however a tradition which may be termed *kōgi no shakai gengogaku* (interdisciplinary sociolinguistics, literally 'sociolinguistics in a broad sense'). It can be characterized as being radical and anti-establishment, which is already partly due to the fact that it emerged as a reaction to the situation outlined above.

4 Interdisciplinary Sociolinguistics

Scholars engaged in interdisciplinary sociolinguistics have largely been trained in neighbouring disciplines such as sociology, historical studies, political science, anthropology, impairment studies, or legal studies. They often study sociolinguistic phenomena by departing from perspectives of their own disciplines.

Consider some examples. Fudano Kazuo (2012) started exploring issues of human rights relating to local language at the court of law. In so doing, issues of Japanese dialects and also of the Ryūkyūan languages have been addressed. Somewhat misleading by its name, the journal *Shakai gengogaku* (sociolinguistics) has mainly published papers centered on topics related to language rights and 'people with inadequate access to information', called *jōhō jakusha* in Japanese. It also frequently features papers from the field of impairment studies and the sociology of knowledge. A series of publications by Nakamura (e.g. 1995, 2001, 2007) have gone beyond attempts to link women's language to polite language use. She analyzed power relations in heterosexual relationships as a crucial force in shaping and defining gender. While it is not yet clear how Cameron and Kulick's (2003) *Language and Sexuality*, translated into Japanese by Nakamura in 2009 will relate to linguistic research in Japan henceforth, it is clear that issues behind chapter titles such as *What Has Gender Got to Do with Sex? Language, Heterosexuality and Heteronormativity* or *Sexuality as Identity: Gay and Lesbian Language* have not been addressed by mainstream sociolinguistics in Japan and require indeed an interdisciplinary approach to sociolinguistics (see Henshū Iinkai 2014).

Interdisciplinary sociolinguistics in Japan is not simply applying established models on Japan. It develops new approaches as well. These incorporate methods and perspectives from disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, pedagogy or legal studies. Interdisciplinary sociolinguistics is also conducted in associations like the *Nihongo jendā gakkai* (Japanese Language Gender Society), the *Hō to gengo gakkai* (Law and Language

Society), or the *Bogo, keishōgo, bairingaru kenkyūkai* (Research Society in First Language, Heritage Language and Bilingualism).

In order to give some concrete evidence to the range and extent of the expansion of sociolinguistics in Japan, some of the more recent and influential works are briefly introduced below:

Kimura Goro Christoph (2005). *Gengo ni totte 'jin'isei' to wa nanika – Gengo kōchiku to gengo ideorogii* ('Artificiality' in Language: Language Adaptation and Language Ideology): this is a seminal work in the sociology of language, refraining from the unproductive opposition of culture and nature in language. The importance of this book derives from the fact that it does not solely sort out methodological problems limited to Japanese sociolinguistics but also bears potential lessons for sociolinguistics at large.

Noro Kayoko; Yamashita Hitoshi (eds.) (2009). *'Tadashisa' e no toi – Hihanteki shakai gengogaku no kokoromi* (Towards a Questioning of 'Correctness': An Initiative in Critical Sociolinguistics): this collection of papers explores the hegemony of dominant ideology, and sociolinguistically deconstructs how dominant notions of linguistic appropriateness have emerged and are maintained.

Ueda Kōji; Yamashita Hitoshi (eds.) (2011). *'Kyōsei' no naijitsu – Hihanteki shakai gengogaku kara no toikake* (Facts About 'Coexistence': A Critical Sociolinguistic Inquiry): this collection of papers critically examines how the acceptance of a multicultural society in the Japanese Archipelago led to a discourse about coexistence between majority and minorities. Upon inspection, however, this discourse turns out to be completely centered on the interests and problems of the majority only.

Shōji Hiroshi; Backhaus, Peter; Coulmas, Florian (eds.) (2009). *Nihon no gengo keikan* (Linguistic Landscapes of Japan): a collection of papers examining the transformation of attitudes towards foreigners and disabled persons on the basis of written language in public space.

Masiko Hidenori (ed.) (2012). *Kotoba, kenryoku, sabetsu – Gengo-ken kara mita jōhō jakusha no kaihō*. (Language, Authority, Discrimination: Empowerment from Linguistic Perspectives of People with Inadequate Access to Information): this volume explores possibilities for the appropriation of rights by people with inadequate access to information. It broadly draws on other disciples such as legal studies, disability studies or sociology.

Kadoya Hidenori; Abe Yasushi (eds.) (2010). *Shikiji no shakai gengogaku* (The Sociolinguistics of Literacy): this book is a fundamental critic of the popular myth of a Japanese literacy rate unmatched by any other country in the world. This myth is usually unquestioned and thus reproduced by educators operating under the influence of assimilationist ideology and by emancipation movement activists alike. Sociolinguistics aside, the individual papers draw also on disability studies, sociology, or the history of education.

Sumi Tomoyuki (2012). *Shikiji shinwa o yomitoku* (Deciphering the Literacy Myth): this book takes a similar direction to the book above but approached literacy mainly from a sociological perspective. Besides the issue of literacy itself, it also devotes much attention to the historical developments of scholarly debates on literacy.

Henshū Iinkai (2012): *Kotoba to shakai* (Language and Society), 14: this special volume is devoted to 'rethinking literacy'. It discusses various issues of writing with Chinese characters, adding many new insights to the discussion of illiteracy.

Koyama Wataru (2012). *Komyunikeeshon-ron no manazashi* (Investigating Communication Studies): this book is an introduction to pragmatics by a linguistic anthropologist. It discusses what kind of intellectual resources exist from sociolinguistic and pragmatic points of view in order to comprehensively deal with a wide range of communication phenomena.

Shirai Yasuhiro (2013). *Kotoba no rikugaku – Ōyō gengaku e no shōtai* (The Mechanics of Language: An Invitation to Applied Linguistics): a matter-of-fact introduction to sociolinguistics written by a specialist of language acquisition. Compared to other introductions to sociolinguistics, this book addresses a broader and more general readership. While the book does not cover all areas of sociolinguistic research, it does include potentially political issues of language. It is also a good introduction to the basic ideas of Western sociolinguistics from the 1980s onwards.

The present situation of sociolinguistic research in Japan is thus as follows. In addition to the customary range of mainstream Japanese sociolinguistics an ever-increasing number of scholars from various fields of study are engaging in research of sociolinguistic orientation. These scholars are filling research gaps not addressed by mainstream sociolinguistics. It is in this sense that the Japanese entry on Wikipedia (2014) has a point in stating that «at the present the range of study conducted under the label sociolinguistics is quite diverse, making it difficult to define sociolinguistics in a straightforward way».

5 Outlook

The multicultural and multilingual make-up of the Japanese Archipelago started only to be more widely recognized with the emergence of new immigrants such as the Brazilians of Japanese descent from the 1990s onwards. Sociologists of education initiated long over-due research how social class reflected in language and culture in the Japanese Archipelago. Researchers familiar with research trends outside Japan started pointing out at an unequal distribution of power between majority and minorities, and at the various forms of discrimination resulting thereof. Linguistic diversity also became increasingly difficult to ignore. Ainu, Ryūkyūans and the Deaf started calling for recognition as cultural and linguistic minorities. At the same time, the myth of a classless society in Japan has given way to a discourse on a *kakusa shakai* (disparate society). In addressing these issues, interdisciplinary sociolinguistics has gradually grown.

Interdisciplinary sociolinguistics regards linguistic diversity as a reflection of social forces and mobility. This renders disciplinary divisions in which sociolinguistics is merely one part of linguistics meaningless. Studying linguistic phenomena in its interrelation with society is part of a more comprehensive approach which employs theories from various disciplines. It applies itself to real-life issues and problems. The image of a homogenous linguistic and cultural space may remain dominant still, especially in bureaucratic contexts and public education, but its influence has been weakening. Publications stating that the Japanese Archipelago has always been multilingual and dynamic rather that homogenous and static are on the rise. Furthermore, a considerable number of Japanese language educators are today familiar with sociolinguistics and put it to use in debates on issues such as language rights of foreign residents and other issues relating to language planning and policy (see e.g. Tajiri, Ōzu 2010).

Despite the transformation of Japanese sociolinguistics in recent years many issues remain to be addressed and research needs to be further expanded. The case of *yasashii nihongo* (easy Japanese) is such an example. It was created by researchers as an effect of the communication barriers foreigners experienced after the Great Hanshin Earthquake of 1995 (cf. *Gensai no tame no yasashii nihongo*). While easy Japanese was also promoted for spreading information after the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011, a brief look at materials such as *Information in Easy Japanese on the Great East Japan Earthquake* (cf. «Higashi nihon dai-shinsai ni kansuru») reveals that there are serious limitations in understanding the content without a certain amount of proficiency in Chinese characters. Furthermore, considerations of how to ensure access to information pertaining to health and welfare constitute fields waiting to be fully explored. Sociolinguists could also be more actively involved in ensuring access to information in public spaces through translation, simplified language use, multi-modal support, etc.

All in all, we can predict that a empirical and comparative approach attempting to render regional varieties into databases will coexist with interdisciplinary sociolinguistics in Japan henceforth. Both directions of study will continue to compete for access to research grants. Which one will become dominant, and prevail in the longer run, ultimately depends on the place that Japan is seeking to find in a globalizing world, and what image of Japanese society it wants to project into the future.

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In recent years Japan has faced the rapid changes characterizing the post-global world, vis-à-vis the economic crisis, as well as the new geopolitical equilibrium amongst the Asian countries after the economic and military rise of China. Moreover, the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster of March 2011 poses a series of questions about energy management, social solidarity, and emergency management along with the problems of confidence in the national safety system that Japan has had to cope with. This volume is a collection of contributions on a project examining various aspects of such contemporary Japanese society in a period of changes in economic, political, and cultural fields. It comprises three sections: Japan's International Relations; Cultural Theory, Fine Art and Philosophy; Language and Communication.

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