

Rethinking Nature in Contemporary Japan

From Tradition to Modernity

edited by Bonaventura Ruperti, Silvia Vesco and Carolina Negri

Preface / Foreword

It is a pleasure for us to present this book, with the contributions of the International Symposium *Rethinking Nature in Japan: from Tradition to Modernity* held at Ca' Foscari University of Venice in the Auditorium Santa Margherita.

This was the Second International Conference organized in Venice: in 2013 we celebrated the first Symposium *Rethinking Nature in Contemporary Japan. Science, Economics, Politics*, published by Edizioni Cafoscari in 2014.

The aim of the Symposium was the analysis of Japanese society and the international relationships after the accident at Fukushima nuclear plant in March 2011.

Its wide-ranging consequences on everyday life of Japanese citizens brought into the limelight issues such as the protection of the environment, the management of natural resources, and food safety, both within the country and abroad, as fundamental challenges to our globalised society.

In 2013, the participation of scholars from Europe, Japan and United States helped us to achieve a deeper insight into this multifaceted issue, combining several disciplines under a multidisciplinary and comparative approach.

At the root of all these problems stand the basic theme of the relation between man and nature. Historically, Japan has developed through the centuries an extremely rich tradition on this complex topic, in the intellectual field as well as in terms of material culture.

That is the reason why we decided to choose as the theme of this Symposium in 2014 the cultural representations of the idea of *Nature* in the transition from tradition to modernity.

This Symposium, "*Rethinking Nature in Japan: From Tradition to Modernity*", was centered on Fine Arts, Religion and Thought, Literature, Theatre and Cinema.

We had four panel sessions: "Nature and Environment in Japanese Fine Arts: from Tradition to Modernity", in Japanese Literature, in Japanese Thought and in Performing Arts.

First of all, as a representative of Ca' Foscari University and of our colleagues, we would like to thank all students, guests and colleagues for their presence at the Symposium, and thank also our special guests from Japan, from the United State, from Europe and from Italy for their (precious) contributions. We believe for all the participants [students, scholars, lecturers, for you and for us] our Symposium was very interesting and fruitful and we hope that the same will be also for this book.

We would like to thank the representatives of our University, the Rector of Ca' Foscari University, prof. Carlo Carraro and prof. Tiziana Lippiello, Director of the Department of Asian and North African Studies for their constant support.

We are much indebted to the Director Matsunaga Fumio and to the Japan Foundation for their special attention to the Japanese Studies Section of our Department.

As for our sponsors, we would like to express our thanks to SAGA [School of Asian Studies and Business Management] for the generous financial support.

We are also grateful to the artist Miyayama Hiroaki who painted the wisteria branch in the poster of the program and generously allowed us to use it as the logo of our Symposium, and prof. Caterina Virdis Limentani of Padua University who organized the exhibition: *Splendori dal Giappone, Le storie del principe Genji nella tradizione Edo e nelle incisioni di Miyayama Hiroaki* and the relation between this work and Miyayama's prints in Padua at Palazzo Zuckermann from March 1st to 31st, 2014.

Last but not least, we would thank again all the students who attended the Symposium, the speakers/contributors from Japan, United State, Europe, Italy, the student staff, all our colleagues of the Japanese Section, our young researchers, the organizing committee: Paolo Calvetti, Massimo Raveri, Luisa Bienati, Aldo Tollini, Marcella Mariotti, Giovanni Bulian, Caterina Mazza, Toshio Miyake, Andrea Revelant and Pierantonio Zanotti, to all the administration staff Anna Genovese, Lisa Botter and Anna Franca Sibiriu in the Department and in this Auditorium.

The Symposium was the perfect occasion to rethink about the relationship between man and nature in our World, and more in particular about the intimate connection between Japanese culture and nature. For this reason we were delighted to invite as keynote speaker prof. Shirane Haruo (the Weatherhead East Asian Institute and the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, Columbia University, New York City) who in recent years published *Japan and the Culture of the Four Seasons*, a compelling account of how Japan has appropriated, interpreted, and valued nature over the centuries.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks to all our speakers for their active and fruitful participation in the Symposium and very much hope that we will have chance to work again together in the not too distant future.

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