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ACTA ASIATICA VARSOVIENSIA

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To the memory of Professor Karin Tomala  
Whom we lost for ever



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## BOOK REVIEWS

**Patrick Hein, *How the Japanese Became Foreign to Themselves. The Impact of Globalization on the Private and Public Spheres in Japan*, Wien; Zürich; Berlin; Münster: Lit, 2009, 234 pp.**

This book was written in English by Patrick Hein, and published by Lit Publishing House in 2009. It consists of three chapters and closes with conclusions and a forecast. The title refers to the very current issue of globalization and its influence on Japanese society. The author is a young researcher who gained a scholarship to Japanese and German universities (Marburg and Waseda). He says that the question of whether Arendt's distinction of the private, public and society can be applied to the Japanese cultural context will be examined in the book.

The introduction to the first chapter is a very good overview of the globalization problem in numerous dimensions. The author presents the fear which has arisen in Japan that globalization would destroy the country, and the feeling that it is wrong to follow the US and its policy blindly (p. 12). Hein also presents globalization as a two-way process of mutual learning and change (p. 15). He emphasises that his study aims to analyse the historical relationship between the public and private spheres. Hein introduces such notions as the state, self-interest, civil participation and globalization itself. The author also presents notions characteristic of Japan, such as shame, superiority, excellence, honour and fame, and introduces the samurai culture. A broad introduction to Japanese society and culture is also provided. Basically, the whole chapter offers the reader a great deal of knowledge on Japan from the samurai period until now, which can be considered as a good introduction to the problem under consideration.

The second chapter, entitled 'The invisible impact of globalization on psychopathology and mental health', takes an unusual approach to the problem with an interesting description of the role of mental health in the making of modern Japan and the globalization issue. Social problems such as family patterns, the *hikikomori* issue, of teenagers who stay closed in their rooms without any interaction with the surrounding world; *amae*, the coddling of children, confusions of ethnic identity and suicides are discussed. This chapter can be treated as a perfect synthesis of social issues in contemporary Japan, in the context of psychopathology and other medical questions. In comparison to the first chapter, the following two are relatively short, but synthetic.

The third chapter concerns the ecological utopia in Japan and a discussion of the role of NGOs and NPOs in opening the doors to a vision of ecology after the Kyoto Protocol. We

can find an overview through different non-governmental and non-profit organizations dealing with environmental problems. Questions concerning energy are also examined although it should be remembered that this publication was completed before the Fukushima nuclear disaster. The author also raises the problem of court decisions and compensation for victims regarding various incidents of petrochemical pollution or governmental mistakes which caused serious health problems to citizens.

To summarize, this book is a good compendium of knowledge regarding modern Japanese society and different social issues in Japan. Moreover, the whole analysis is conducted in the light of globalization, which provides a perfect overview. Furthermore, in the appendices we can find the full text of a briefing on Japan's anti-global warming policy, an interview with Marutei Tsutunen from the DP and Yukiko Koike from the LPD, which also gives the reader an interesting approach to the problem's analysis. This book can definitely be recommended to those interested in Japanese contemporary society, and also as a supplement for researchers and students of social sciences.

Olga Barbasiewicz

**Osamu Hattori, Viktoria Eschnach-Szabo, Martina Ebi (editors), *Japan and Japanese People. Views from a Transcultural Perspective. A Joint Project of Doshisha University and Eberhard Karls University Tübingen*, Wien; Zürich; Berlin; Münster: Lit, 2010, 155 pp.**

This book is a collection of essays from Doshisha University and the Eberhard Karls University in Tübingen, written in English and edited by Osamu Hattori, Viktoria Eschnach-Szabo and Martina Ebi, which was published by Lit Publishing House in 2010. This series of articles written by exceptional scholars who specialize in Japanese culture and society is based on the workshop entitled 'Japanese People and Culture: Views from a Transcultural Perspective' which was held at the Eberhard Karls University Tübingen in 2009.

As emphasized in the preface to this book, foreigners' views of Japan have changed dramatically over the past century (p. 1). This was the starting point for analyzing Japanese culture from a transcultural perception, which is a very interesting approach to a culture considered as unique.

The first essay, titled *Traditionalism and Japanese Acceptance of Foreign Culture*, by Yukuji Okita, describes the history of Japan's discoveries by foreigners. He shows the departure by Japanese scholars from Confucian values to study Western culture and philosophy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Sakuma Shōzan), which is important as there are not many publications about Confucian schools and teaching in the context of Western impact on the Japanese culture after the Meiji Restoration. The majority of the text is dedicated to Yokoi Shōnan, an intellectual who reacted to the threat of the West.

The essay by Viktoria Eschnach-Szabo, *Philipp Franz von Siebold's Transcultural Research Methods*, is dedicated to the 19<sup>th</sup>-century specialist in Japanese studies. He was able to collect information on Japan despite the shogunate's prohibition on foreigners doing so. He studied Japanese names and signs, finding their universal functions, which gave a firm basis to Japanese culture studies in the West.

The next issue undertaken by Osamu Hatori in this volume is the cooperation between a German doctor, Heribert Schmidt, and Japanese doctors who cooperated in the field of acupuncture in the post-war era. Hatori describes Schmidt, his lectures, and the history of acupuncture in Japan and Germany. He emphasizes the role of Schmidt's arrival in Japan and the build-up of a friendly attitude between Westerners and Japanese.

A very short essay by Hiroshi Okabayashi from the Doshisha University is focused on the person of Shūzō Kūki and the question of aesthetics. The transcription of long syllables in this essay differs from these in previous texts, which in my opinion should be unified in all essays.

In her article Michaela Oberwinkler describes the *otaku* issue in the context of the *Trainman* story. The author pays special attention to the Japanese language (both spoken and written) as used by *otaku* who play with pronunciation, and shows the different points of this idiolect to make the reader understand its peculiarity.

The next short essay is by Junko Saeki, in which she analyzes the idealization of 'boys' love' based on two stories, Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* and Hagio Moto's *The Heart of Thomas*. The author undertakes an interesting case of the fascination among Japanese girls with 'boys' love' and introduces it in the context of the gender issue in modern Japan and Germany.

The subject of trans-cultural cooperation and dialogue is examined in two essays by Karin Moser von Filseck and Akemi Hamada. From these articles we learn about the German–East Asian Forum of Sciences and Humanities and its activity, as well as about Japanese students in Germany and the cultural exchange between those nations.

Important questions such as judicial reforms in Japan are also raised in this publication by Hans-Peter Marutschke. These problems are relevant because of the social changes towards which the new judicial system leads. It should be considered as a vital problem while analyzing social issues in this country.

Linguistic matters are also brought up in this collection of essays, in the English letters of Shimeta Neesima and a discussion of new loanwords in Japanese and German.

To summarize this publication, different, interdisciplinary approaches regarding Japanese society are emphasized. The book shows the condition of Japanese studies in Germany, but also the cooperation between European (specifically German) universities and Japanese ones. It is very important to show such problems to the wider audience, and to encourage people to follow such paths in researching Japanese culture and society.

Olga Barbasiewicz

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