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# NEW FRONTIERS IN JAPANESE STUDIES

Edited by  
Akihiro Ogawa and Philip Seaton



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# New Frontiers in Japanese Studies

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## Introduction

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### **Envisioning new frontiers in Japanese Studies**

*Akihiro Ogawa and Philip Seaton*

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# Introduction

## Envisioning new frontiers in Japanese Studies

*Akihiro Ogawa and Philip Seaton*

Japanese Studies is defined in this book as the interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary study of Japan in the social sciences and humanities, in which analysis of Japan in domestic, international or comparative contexts using both Japanese and non-Japanese sources is disseminated to an international audience. More than simply the ‘study of Japan’, therefore, Japanese Studies is one of the area studies within academia and higher education. The above definition may be inferred from the professional activities and standards of researchers and teachers within Japanese Studies. The *Journal of Japanese Studies*, for example, calls itself a ‘multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary forum for communicating new information, interpretations, and research on Japan’ and further states that ‘[a]uthors are expected to engage with Japanese-language sources and scholarship’ (*Journal of Japanese Studies* n.d.).

This focus on language is crucial. While there may be researchers in any disciplinary department who write about Japan, the clear expectation in Japanese Studies is that researchers are proficient to a professional level in the Japanese language, and engage as both readers and writers with scholarly discourse in Japanese. Furthermore, they play a role in interpreting the discourse occurring in Japanese to those unable to access the original Japanese-language debate. Many Japanese Studies academics also consider translation of significant works to be a major component of their work, even if it goes largely unrewarded by the present employee evaluation systems in place in particularly English-speaking universities. On an educational level, the major Japanese Studies departments around the world include intensive language training in the Japanese language alongside a range of social sciences and humanities classes taught in the language of the host country and/or English and/or Japanese.

Early in the twenty-first century, Japanese Studies is in the somewhat strange position of having a sense of crisis while at the same time going from strength to strength. The sense of crisis emanates from a number of factors: Japan’s perceived diminishing presence or relevance on the world economic stage, particularly in relation to a rising China; a dearth of higher education funding which has contributed to Japan’s universities tumbling down international rankings and denting the perceived quality of research/education in Japan; the general disadvantage that area studies face in comparison to disciplines in the neoliberal competitive frameworks of rankings and impact; and lingering perceptions of Japan as a

‘unique’ case whose lessons are not necessarily transferable to others. At the same time, Japanese Studies has tremendous potential. Japan remains a world leader in many areas of technological innovation – including disaster prevention, artificial intelligence, robotics and others – which means there is great scope within Japanese Studies to explore the future implications of technological innovation for human society, particularly in ageing advanced industrialised nations. Furthermore, the large global following of Japanese popular culture has meant that demand from students wishing to learn about the language and culture of Japan has never been stronger. Between 1 May 2012 and 1 May 2018 (the period since the Tohoku earthquake, tsunami and Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant disaster), total international students in Japan have risen from around 160,000 to 300,000 (JASSO 2019). Combined with rapid growth in inbound tourism to Japan, from 5.2 million people in 2003 to 31.2 million people in 2018 (JNTO 2019), learning about and experiencing Japan have never been more popular. Given that most of this growth in Japan-related interest is generated from within Asia, another priority for Japanese Studies in the twenty-first century becomes apparent: to place Asian scholars and students at the heart of Japanese Studies and to engage in a degree of ‘de-Westernisation’.

This book examines ‘new frontiers’ within Japanese Studies. By ‘new frontiers’ we are referring partly to this shift in geographical emphasis. Two major publications on the state of Japanese Studies have done so in their own explicitly national contexts: Patricia Steinhoff (2007) has examined the field from an American perspective, while Hugh Cortazzi and Peter Kornicki (2016) have done an equivalent study on Britain. In envisioning Japanese Studies for the next generation, we will build on the work of Kaori Okano, Yoshio Sugimoto and the contributors to the edited volume *Rethinking Japanese Studies: Eurocentrism and the Asia-Pacific Region* (Okano and Sugimoto 2018) and shed light on emerging places and scholars in Japanese Studies in the Asia Pacific region, since the field is still dominated by Western scholars in the United States and Europe. We need to aim to integrate multiple perspectives on Japanese society, particularly those hitherto considered or treated as ‘peripheral’ (see Ben-Ari 2017), into the field. In so doing, our efforts will push back the existing boundaries of scholarship and generate a more inclusive field of Japanese Studies. To this end, this book includes scholars from a wide range of national backgrounds – Japan, China, South Korea, Russia, Australia, the Philippines, Indonesia and Bangladesh, as well as the United Kingdom, Germany and Austria – who all have extensive experience living both inside and outside Japan. This is an important prerequisite for creating dialogue on future scholarship about Japan.

We also envision ‘new frontiers’ as part of a repositioning of Japanese Studies from ‘outsiders looking in’ to ‘insiders looking out’. In other words, the challenge for Japanese Studies is to leave behind the antiquated paradigm of ‘unlocking the mysteries of the Japanese and presenting this fascinating and unique culture to the world’, and to normalise discussion of Japan as one of the major world economies/cultures and integrate it more fully into global and transnational discourses. This runs slightly against one of the current political trends

in Japan, which is to cling somewhat to the antiquated paradigm and see the role of Japanese Studies in Japan as disseminating ‘accurate’ knowledge about Japan to the world. Instead, while reviewing the history of the distinctive conceptual framework of Japanese Studies, we want to explore new approaches with a particular focus on how the ideas and issues that arise in our research about Japan provide direct solutions to common global challenges in the twenty-first century. Without exploring these new approaches, Japanese Studies will be in perpetual crisis, isolated like a creature that survives on only one of the Galapagos Islands.

Finally, we perceive a ‘new frontier’ in Japanese Studies as a decisive movement away from the idea that people working in Japanese Studies are primarily presenting case studies while eschewing theoretical contributions to knowledge. In making the case for the wealth of media theory emanating from Japan, Marc Steinberg and Alexander Zahltén (2017, pp. 2–3) note the ‘familiar structural imbalance in knowledge production itself ... between a West that is figured as the site of Theory, and the Rest as the site of history or raw materials (“texts”)’. Japanese Studies scholarship, we argue, has the potential to make important theoretical contributions with broader applications outside Japan, too, if only the broader academy can dispel notions (perhaps ‘prejudices’ is more accurate) that Japanese Studies is a peripheral area of scholarship that needs only be engaged by ‘Japan specialists’. However, this is not simply a question of expecting others to pay attention. Steven Vlastos has made the somewhat harsh critique that, ‘The irrelevance of Japan Studies to American academia, I believe, is partly self-imposed: the consequence of indifference if not hostility toward theory’ (cited in Tansman 2004, p. 191). This statement may be a little stark, but the new frontier we aim for in this book adheres to its underlying logic: research in Japanese Studies *should* be relevant well beyond those interested in Japan *precisely because* it is making an important theoretical contribution of international relevance. In particular, these theoretical contributions will relate to the most pertinent global issues of our age: wealth, power and inequality in the neoliberal world order; environmental collapse; emerging power rivalries and their historical roots; and the social changes caused by ageing societies, transnational mobility, automation, technological advancement and artificial intelligence.

## The history of Japanese Studies

Area studies, including Japanese Studies, have only a relatively short history within the overall history of academia. Patricia Steinhoff (2007) has presented a three-paradigm history of Japanese Studies in the United States. In this section we develop and expand upon her work in both temporal and geographical scope to present a broad picture of where Japanese Studies came from, and therefore where its future trajectories might lie. As indicated in Table 0.1, we consider Japanese Studies from the perspectives of the actors involved in it (divided into Japanese, non-Japanese and, in recent times, multicultural) and the sites of their activities (inside Japan, outside Japan). Broadly speaking, Japanese Studies divides into pre-1945 and post-1945 eras. The prewar era is the foundational stage, while the postwar stage is when professionalised Japanese Studies at universities emerges.



Table 0.1 The phases of Japanese Studies

	<i>Non-Japanese researchers, teachers, students</i>	<i>Japanese researchers, teachers, students</i>
<i>Early imperial (to c.1905)</i>		
Outside Japan	Japan research largely the preserve of ‘amateurs’ with some experience in Japan. Authorities on the distant, mysterious orient. Development of oriental learned societies.	Japanese travel abroad to learn from the West; treated there as ‘representative living examples’ of the culture.
Inside Japan	The colonial adventurer or expat; the eccentric who has ‘gone native’; invited foreign experts ( <i>o-yatoi gaikokujin</i> ).	Objects of anthropological study introduced by Japanologists to their domestic audience.
<i>Late imperial (to c.1945)</i>		
Outside Japan	Beginnings of Japanese language teaching in Western universities. Shift from ‘understanding the culture’ to ‘understanding the enemy/ally’ amidst increasing confrontation and ultimately war.	Handful of Japanese language teachers at Western universities; mass language education in Japan’s colonies.
Inside Japan	The scaling down of the Western presence as war approaches; Japan’s imperial power status and Pan-Asianism bring Asian students/intellectuals to Japan.	Intellectuals (e.g. Kyoto School) ended up supporting and disseminating nationalist positions on the road to war.
<i>Postwar (to 1960s)</i>		
Outside Japan	Pioneers of area studies at Western universities. Professionalisation of Japanese Studies. Cultural interpreters whose training and perspectives are rooted in the war years.	Era of restrictions on travel abroad by ordinary Japanese. Japan largely represented abroad by prewar migrants and their descendants.
Inside Japan	Occupation era workers, and post-occupation area studies pioneers in Japan for fieldwork.	An introspective era as Japan debates defeat and seeks new intellectual directions in the postwar.
<i>Internationalisation (from 1970s to 1980s)</i>		
Outside Japan	Proliferation of Japanese Studies journals and academic societies. Researchers are authorities on a distant but fast-growing economy. Pioneers of area studies in Asia look to Japan as a model.	Pioneers of autonomous study abroad; expatriate researchers teaching language and/or the social sciences and humanities. Subordinate status as ‘foreign lecturers’.

	<i>Non-Japanese researchers, teachers, students</i>	<i>Japanese researchers, teachers, students</i>
Inside Japan	Mainly Western language teachers who also write on Japanese society/culture. Subordinate status as 'foreign lecturers'.	<i>Nihonjinron</i> discourse; domestic interpreters of the secrets of Japanese success whose voices reach abroad.
<i>Globalisation (from 1990s to 2010s)</i>		
Outside Japan	Holding the reins of academic power in Japanese Studies during the neoliberal educational era of rankings and 'impact factor journals'.	Emergence of the discipline-based Japanese researcher making their career abroad. Breakthrough of some into management.
Transnational	Massive increase in connectivity in the Internet era. Erosion of distinctions between 'Japanese' and 'foreign'. Increasing numbers of multicultural, multilingual researchers build international research careers with a focus on Japan in its international environment.	
Inside Japan	Interest in pop culture displaces interest in economic secrets of success as Japan grows into a major study abroad destination. Emergence of the discipline-based researcher making their career in Japan. Breakthrough of some into management.	Japan-based scholars as international voices either via translation or publishing their work online (mainly) in English. Political and financial backing for 'Japanese Studies in Japan'.
<i>New frontiers (2020s onwards)</i>		
Outside Japan	Diffusion of centres of power to scholars in countries outside the West, particularly in Asia. De-Westernisation of Japanese Studies. Increased collaboration between Japanese Studies and the natural sciences.	The internationally mobile scholar whose reputation and seniority are increasingly unchained from nationality.
Transnational	Japanese Studies becomes ever more multicultural, multilingual, interdisciplinary and transnational in nature. Japan's role in combatting climate breakdown (environment), ageing society and migration (human mobility) emerge as core issues.	
Inside Japan	The internationally mobile scholar whose reputation and seniority are increasingly unchained from nationality.	Japanese Studies reoriented towards global rather than domestic issues. Deepened relationships with Asia. Increased collaboration with researchers from the natural sciences.

Japanese Studies traces its roots back to the earliest learned journals focusing on Japan. The Asiatic Society of Japan is Japan's oldest learned society publishing research on Japan, but its website (ASJ n.d.) in 2019 says:

ASJ's members have met regularly since the first meeting in Yokohama in 1872. As in Hepburn's day, we come from many professions and occupations. What unites us is our aspiration to scholarliness by how we pursue our investigations and discoveries about Asiatic Countries, most especially Japan.

This places the Society outside modern academic Japanese Studies, but this pioneering organisation and its journal clearly occupy important positions in the history of Japanese Studies. The oldest of the major academic journals within the contemporary field of Japanese Studies is *Monumenta Nipponica* (established at Sophia University in 1938), but most other key journals date from the 1970s onwards. There was another key turning point in the 2000s with the emergence of online journals such as the *Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*.

There is a similarly long gestation of Japanese language teaching. Masaaki Seki identifies three main periods: assisting foreigners in Japan to learn Japanese (up to the end of the nineteenth century), Japanese language education as a tool of imperialism (to 1945) and Japanese language teaching as part of international exchange (the postwar period) (Seki 1997, p. 5). During the first few decades of the twentieth century, Japanese language classes started to be offered at some Western universities. In Britain the School of Oriental Studies (now SOAS, University of London) had the first Japanese language courses from 1917 (Oba 1995, p. 3; Gerstle and Cummings 2016), while in Australia, Moshi Inagaki started teaching at the University of Melbourne in 1917 and, in the United States, Princeton University founded the Department of Oriental Languages and Literatures in 1927 and Japanese language classes started at Harvard University in the 1930s. The main practice of Japanese language education, however, was in primary and secondary schools in Japan's prewar and wartime colonies. Here, teaching new imperial subjects the Japanese language was integral to imperial policy.

While these foundations of modern Japanese Studies were laid before the Second World War, interdisciplinary area studies primarily began in the United States after the Second World War. As Alan Tansman notes, 'Before the war, the field was dominated by part-time practitioners and amateurs offering only the bare beginnings of training' (2004, p. 186). After the war, the creation of new area studies was a response to American demand for knowledge about enemies and external threats, for example, the Soviet Union during the Cold War. In the United Kingdom, too, Asian Studies departments emerged. For example, the University of Sheffield's School of East Asian Studies started in 1963 and was 'a pioneer of the "dual degree" system, in which East Asian languages are taught together with the social sciences and other disciplines – an approach which is now standard throughout the UK' (University of Sheffield n.d.).

Japanese Studies was a frontrunner in this context. Published in 1946, Ruth Benedict's classic anthropological work *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*:

*Patterns of Japanese Culture* (1946) was originally a product of wartime research that aimed to understand and even predict the so-called irrational behaviour of Japanese people. Into the postwar era, the war continued to play a role in shaping Japanese Studies. Many of the big names of these early postwar years, such as Donald Keene, Ian Nish, Ronald Dore or Edwin Reischauer, either received their language training in the context of war- or occupation-era needs, or their lives in Japan (often as the children of missionaries) had been greatly disrupted by the war (see Oguma 2018).

Benedict's book significantly shaped American perceptions of Japanese culture by using what we call a 'national character approach', a form of stereotyped characterisation of a nation that focuses on only one or a few of the attributes of its people. Key descriptors included *bushido*, *kabuki*, *noh* and *geisha*. Along with Ruth Benedict, we should not forget John Embree's pioneering work with his wife Ella on *Suye Mura* (Embree 1939). He conducted fieldwork in rural Kumamoto in the mid-1930s, which culminated in the first ethnographic study of Japan by a Westerner. Embree's project was part of a larger study conducted at the University of Chicago under the direction of A.R. Radcliffe-Brown on societies in East Asia. The early research tradition seemed to adhere to 'essentialism', the claim that scholars ought to work from the assumption that certain cultural features have always been present in any society, and that their job is simply to find and record these essential features and document how they have persisted over centuries virtually unchanged. However, in the postwar context with Japanese views and voices weakened or discredited following defeat, it would take a couple of decades (perhaps until Yasunari Kawabata's Nobel Prize for Literature in 1968) before the Western academy felt it needed to listen more carefully again to Japanese voices.

By the 1970s, the Japanese economic miracle was in full swing and Japan was once again an economic and cultural force to be reckoned with. During this period, a genre called *Nihonjinron* (literally, theories of the Japanese) developed within Japan that had significant impact on scholarship by non-Japanese. *Nihonjinron* works were in the model of Ruth Benedict's cultural relativism, which states that each culture has its own moral imperatives that can be understood only if one studies that culture as a whole. This idea was originally advocated by Franz Boas, a pioneer of modern anthropology who has been called the 'father of American anthropology' in the early twentieth century. During this time, the *Nihonjinron* type of literature enjoyed a heyday as Japan expanded its economic presence globally into the asset-inflated bubble economy of the late 1980s. The Japanese language also received considerable attention as a medium for business communication.

The *Nihonjinron* framework addressed the distinctive characteristics of Japanese personality, culture and society. Its underlying claims were that Japan is 'uniquely unique', or fundamentally and qualitatively different from Western societies. Chie Nakane's argument on Japan's vertically structured society (1970) and Takeo Doi's *amae* (roughly 'dependency orientation' [1973]) are two important contributions to Japanese Studies scholarship. They also represent

the two major routes by which Japanese scholars were contributing to the emerging field of Japanese Studies from the 1960s: either as internationally respected scholars publishing in English (Nakane's seminal *Japanese Society* appeared in 1970) or as scholars publishing in Japanese whose work was considered important to the field and published in English translation.

A further characteristic of work in this period is that Japan was frequently contrasted with 'the West' and particularly America. The so-called 'group model' and the 'general middle-class society model' drew on generalisations about Japanese society, presenting it as a uniform entity with little internal variation. This contrasted with the more individualistic West. Contrasts with other Asian countries were conspicuous by their absence. Out of such discourse came some of the words frequently associated with Japan even to this day, such as 'unique' and 'homogeneous'. *Nihonjinron* discourse – either works by Japanese or works presenting similar arguments in English and other languages – has been extensively criticised for its essentialism and resorting to stereotype (for example, Dale 1986/2011; Befu 2001), although as Ian Littlewood has argued, the enduring power of stereotypes is that there is often a heavy element of truth to them which resonates clearly with many people (1996, p. xiii).

Japan's emerging economic presence was a significant issue in Japanese Studies. Pioneers of area studies in Asia looked to Japan as a model. For example, Harvard scholar Ezra Vogel's *Japan as Number One* (1979) also brought Japan's management cases to the global convergence debate, which was originally started by Ronald Dore's book *British Factory: Japanese Factory* (1973). These works argue that the world is converging on patterns that are prevalent in Japanese society, as evidenced by the widespread adoption of various elements of the Japanese management model by multinational corporations of Western origin. Chalmers Johnson's book *MITI and the Japanese Miracle* (1982), which is a study on the Japanese Ministry of International Trade and Industry, is in line with this tradition. Johnson coined the term 'developmental state', which refers to a state that is focused on economic development and takes necessary policy measures to accomplish that objective. He argued that Japanese capitalism was a different kind of capitalism based on the 'developmental state' model, in which the national bureaucracy played a pivotal role in shaping national policy in Japan's national interests only. American universities have indeed played a significant role in Japanese Studies over the past century. Many universities, including Ivy League schools, established area studies departments and programmes to promote understanding as well as to enhance knowledge about Japan and thus produced many prominent Japan specialists.

These two paradigms of Steinhoff's (2007) model equate to the phases we have called 'Postwar' and 'Internationalisation' in Table 0.1. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Ruth Benedict type of Japanology paradigm flourished. The second paradigm was led by the *Nihonjinron* scholarship in the 1970s and 1980s and featured groupist Japan, including lifetime employment, enterprise unions, *kanban* for lean manufacturing and elite bureaucrats. In Asia, meanwhile, countries were winning their independence from former colonial masters and looking

increasingly to Japan as an example of a non-Western economic success story. Relations between Japan and other Asian countries remain deeply affected by the events of Japanese imperialism, but this has always coincided with admiration for Japan's achievements. Chapters 4 by Yi Zou and Chapter 5 by Himawan Pratama and Antonius R. Pujo Purnomo focus on the two countries with the largest number of learners of the Japanese language in 2015, China and Indonesia, according to surveys conducted by the Japan Foundation. These surveys, selections from which are presented in the Appendix, indicate the massive growth in Japanese language education in Asia since the Japan Foundation was established in 1972. The simple fact that more people study the Japanese language at the higher education level in mainland China than in all of the other countries of the world put together indicates clearly why a focus on Japanese Studies in Asia is long overdue. Asia also has a history of Japan area studies going back almost as far as area studies in the West. The Japanese Studies Program at Ateneo de Manila University, established in 1966, calls itself the first Japanese Studies Program in Southeast Asia (Ateneo de Manila University n.d.). This places the beginnings of Japanese Studies in universities in Asia just after the equivalent launches of area studies in the United States and Europe.

Steinhoff's third paradigm, what we have called 'Globalisation' (Table 0.1) started around the new millennium, as Japanese cultural commodities – in particular, pop culture goods and materials, including manga, anime, sushi, karaoke and J-pop – spread around the world, displacing academic interest in the economic secrets of Japan's success. The development was in tandem with the Cool Japan initiative, a Japanese government-sponsored campaign to create a new global image of Japan. Non-elite, young people were at the forefront of the analysis. Yoshio Sugimoto, a major critic of *Nihonjinron* discourse, points out an important paradigm shift observed in Japanese Studies in his recent article entitled 'Japanese society: Inside out and outside in', which was published in *International Sociology* in 2014, saying that 'Since the 1990s, ... a paradigm has been in progress and the self-glorifying *Nihonjinron* discourse has shown signs of waning.... Japanese society is now increasingly characterized by internal variations and class rivalries, comparable to advanced economies' (2014: 194). As the globalisation process accelerates, Sugimoto continues: 'Japanese society came from being a group-oriented society to a more "multi-ethnic" or multicultural society, as well as a "multiclass", or as we call it, a *kakusa* or divided class society.'

This changing focus of Japan-related scholarship has taken place against the background of major changes across academia. Various developments in the profession – such as the concentration of academic power in Japanese Studies during the neoliberal era (clustered around the leading journals), the establishment of international university rankings, the prominence of metrics and 'impact' in research, and the role of the Internet in transforming the ways that knowledge is produced and disseminated – have all had arguably an impact on Japanese Studies equally as great as the changing subjects of Japan-related research in each era. Area studies journals tend to be weak in terms of citation counts and ranking points, so scholars often face institutional pressure to publish

in discipline journals with higher impact factors. Challenges to area studies have also emerged, such as the concept of ‘anti-area studies’ proposed by Tessa Morris-Suzuki. In this view, a propensity to analyse from centres of political and cultural power overlooks, indeed hardens, the borders where people and cultures meet. Morris-Suzuki (2004, p. 101) writes:

‘Anti-Area Studies’ seeks to examine a specific social, political or historical *problem* from *widely differing* geographical vantage points. In this way, it aims to promote cross-border exchanges of ideas about common problems faced by many countries and regions in our complex and globalized world.

However, while scholars may find ideas such as ‘anti-area studies’ attractive and entirely intuitive on an intellectual level, at the same time universities remain highly dependent on public money and accreditation under national educational laws. National government, therefore, has a major say in the structure, and in some cases curriculum, of higher education institutions. A notable political trend in Japan since the 1980s is to develop ‘Japanese Studies in Japan’ as what might even be called part of Japan’s soft power strategy. The International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) was established in 1987 under Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone. It is funded directly by central government and disseminates research via its in-house journals (*Japan Review*, *Nihon Kenkyū*) and book series. The *Social Science Japan Journal*, meanwhile, was established in 1998 at the University of Tokyo, and the Japan Library book publishing project takes seminal works in Japanese and organises their translation into English. In all these publication initiatives, the funding for translation or proof-reading provided to non-native English speakers is a conspicuous feature. Taken together these various projects constitute a key indication that Japanese actors – researchers, publishers, institutions – want a central role in how Japan is presented abroad, primarily but not exclusively in the English language.

Furthermore, since the Global 30 initiative of 2007, an Education Ministry-led project that aims to promote internationalisation of the academic environment of Japanese universities, leading Japanese universities have been encouraged to produce courses in English aimed at international students focusing on Japan, for example the Japan in East Asia degree as part of the PEAK (Programs in English at Komaba) initiative at the University of Tokyo. According to the programme website (University of Tokyo 2019), ‘The Japan in East Asia Program aims to provide students with a wide range of social science and humanities courses to develop an advanced understanding of Japanese/East Asian politics, economy, society and culture in a global context.’ The trend has quickly shifted from ‘courses in English’ to ‘bilingual courses’, and others have created projects independently. For example, the pioneering bilingual degree at Hokkaido University, the Modern Japanese Studies Program (MJSP), requires international students to take regular content classes in Japanese alongside Japanese classmates as a graduation requirement. Students can choose one of



two modules: (1) history and culture and (2) society and political economy (Hokkaido University 2019). The latest stage of this process is the establishment of the first full department of Japanese Studies at a national university, the School of Japan Studies, at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies in April 2019. This department, again bilingual, accepts students via three entry routes – a standard university entrance exam for domestic students, the Examination for Japanese University Admission for International Students (EJU) for overseas high school graduates with advanced Japanese, and an interview-based selection process for English-speaking candidates without Japanese language skills.

In such endeavours, Japan is not acting alone but merely doing what other nations do as part of cultural diplomacy. Central governments provide funding for organisations such as the British Council, the Confucius Institute and the Japan Foundation, and provide funding and administrative backing to universities for language teaching and area studies. Scholars, therefore, must find a balance between fulfilling their job descriptions as people who ‘work for’ Japanese Studies, but at the same time retain their independence and integrity as researcher-teachers. This can be especially difficult when researching and teaching internationally politicised topics, such as the ‘comfort women’ issue.

The final major change in Japanese Studies in the past two decades has been the rapid emergence of Asian Japanese Studies. Eyal Ben-Ari concludes his study of ‘Peripherality and provinciality in Japanese Studies’ with the comment, ‘For the foreseeable future, however, younger scholars seen to achieve global acknowledgement have to play by the rules of the dominant English-using academic system’ (2017, p. 40). However, while English-language scholarship continues to dominate, in terms of raw numbers of students and researchers of Japan, Asian students already greatly outnumber all other learners of the Japanese language. According to the Japan Foundation’s 2015 survey, 48.2 per cent of overseas Japanese learners are in East Asia and a further 29.9 per cent are in Southeast Asia (Japan Foundation 2017, p. 10). Of the 298,980 international students in Japan on 1 May 2018, 93.4 per cent were from Asia, of whom 114,950 (38.4 per cent) were Chinese (JASSO 2019). Given these numbers, it is inconceivable that the present Western-dominated field of Japanese Studies can continue indefinitely, especially given the meteoric rise of Chinese universities up international university rankings on the back of heavy financial investment by the Chinese government. Other nations are emerging fast, too, particularly countries like Indonesia and Vietnam where there is strong interest in Japan. So, while the English language has been predominant, it is likely that trilingualism will soon be the new normal in Asian area studies, or Japanese Studies in Asian languages will become less ‘peripheral’ and more ‘central’, to use Ben-Ari’s (2017) terminology. Most Asian researchers are already there, speaking their mother tongue, English and Japanese. English-speaking and Japanese-speaking researchers (not usually renowned for their multilingual capabilities) will find it increasingly necessary to speak a third language in order to keep up. And while the current university rankings systems (particularly the Times Higher Education rankings) confer considerable advantages on the English-speaking world, the



day when citation rates for ranking journals in Chinese eclipse those in English-language journals is surely not too far off.

### **Going beyond methodological nationalism**

As discussed at the beginning of this introduction, this book aims to create a future-oriented discussion, addressing global challenges and Japan's relevance to them. We Japan specialists need to make a major effort to locate or directly connect Japanese Studies scholarship to the dynamism of global state-of-the-art studies on social sciences and humanities. For this purpose, while observing the strong legacy of previous research traditions in Japanese Studies, we propose the need to actively go beyond the traditionally dominant conceptual framework. We have identified reorienting the geographical scope of Japanese Studies towards the Asia Pacific, the importance of linking Japan into global discourses and prioritising the theoretical contributions that can be made by scholars working in Japanese Studies. If we were to summarise this in one phrase it would be 'going beyond methodological nationalism'.

Methodological nationalism can be defined as an assumption that the nation-state is the natural and necessary form of society in modernity (Beck 2000, pp. 21–24). Because of methodological nationalism, Japanese Studies has limited its audience as well as its academic potentiality. In the 1970s, Anthony Giddens (1973, p. 265) had already made the following claim:

The primary unit of sociological analysis, the sociologists' 'society' – in relation to the industrialised world at least – has always been, and must continue to be, the administratively bounded nation-state. But 'society' in this sense, has never been the isolated, the 'internally developing' system which has normally been implied in social theory.

He continues:

In fact, any adequate understanding of the development of the advanced societies presupposes the recognition that factors making for 'endogenous' evolution always combine with influences from 'the outside' in determining the transformations to which a society is a subject.

The principle of modernity has been mainly articulated within a discussion of nation-state societies and sees states and their governments as the cornerstones of a social sciences analysis. Indeed, it has governed our research imagination. The nationally bounded structure of the research imagination incapacitates it from making sense of a world that is no longer organised around the nation-state.

Probably the most salient critique of methodological nationalism's contribution to contemporary scholarship has come from Ulrich Beck. It is none other than Beck himself who brought methodological nationalism back into the current debate, and references to it became more prominent in his later publications. Beck

says, '[S]uch theorists as Emile Durkheim, Max Weber and even Karl Marx shared a territorial definition of modern society, and thus a model of society centred on the national-state, which has today been shaken by globality and globalization' (Beck 2000, p. 24). Beck further says:

Social science must be re-established as a transnational science of the reality of denationalization, transnationalization, and 're-ethnification' in a global age – and this on the levels of concepts, theories and methodologies as well as organizationally. This entails that the fundamental concepts of 'modern society' must be re-examined.

(2002, pp. 53–54)

Methodological nationalism, which subsumes society under the nation-state, has until now made this task almost impossible. The alternative, a 'cosmopolitan outlook', is a contested term and project (Beck and Sznaider 2006). To re-conceptualise Japanese Studies, we need to open up new horizons by demonstrating how we can make the empirical investigation of border crossings and other transnational phenomena possible. Beck calls such investigations 'methodological cosmopolitanism' (2006, p. 17), stating that a nation-based outlook is inadequate and too 'soft' a category to 'capture the cosmopolitan challenge of the twenty-first century' (2012, p. 7). This approach can tackle 'what had previously been analytically excluded as a sort of silent cartel of divided fundamental convictions' (Beck 2002, p. 52). Beck raises topics that we need to re-examine, including 'household, family, class, social inequality, democracy, power, state, commerce, public, community, justice, law, history, politics' (2002, p. 52). We believe our epistemology must change so that it matches the ways in which the contemporary world is being transformed.

Japan finds itself amidst the fierce global interactions of people and ideas as our scholarship moves towards 'new frontiers' in the 2020s. The methodology we employ in this book is in line with what Sugimoto proposed – *cosmopolitan methodology* (2018, p. 181) as the new cornerstone of Japanese Studies. Sugimoto argues, '[I]t is multiversal universalism, an attempt to bring a variety of non-Western frameworks into global conversation without contending that there should be one single mode of analysis'. He continues, '[I]t is cosmopolitan in transcending national borders and national interests while searching for indigenous, native and homegrown ideas and insights for worldwide dialogue'.

In the case of Japanese Studies, we can recapitulate a battery of questions inspired by such a vision. Which Japanese homegrown concepts and theories deserve international debate? How can we circumvent institutional and structural impediments to the transnational circulation of Japanese social science scholarship? How can marginal and provincial scholars in Japanese Studies collaborate to counter the Eurocentric dominance? Japanese Studies is becoming ever more multicultural, multilingual, interdisciplinary and transnational in nature.

Japan also has an emerging role in addressing the issues of climate breakdown (global heating), ageing society and migration (human mobility), and we foresee

these being the new research paradigms of Japanese Studies in the upcoming decades, largely replacing the current focus on pop culture. The research will directly address Japan's policymaking, exploring practical solutions for 'real-world' problems in and between organisations, communities and networks through the analysis of the state, business and civil society. Japan has accumulated substantial knowledge to deal with these emerging issues over the past decades, and through scholarly commitments, Japan specialists, who are increasingly unchained from nationality nowadays, are able to actively contribute to innovative collaborations to make actual changes. With this in mind we have assembled a collection of papers that share this vision of 'new frontiers' in Japanese Studies.

### **Structure of the book**

This introductory chapter is followed by 16 chapters in four parts: 'Rethinking Japanese area studies in the twenty-first century', 'Coping with an ageing society', 'Migration and mobility' and 'The environment'.

The first part (Chapters 1–5) envisions potential directions for Japanese Studies in the twenty-first century. Mihalopoulos (Chapter 1) argues that the call for new approaches to Japanese Studies poses a series of interesting challenges such as what should be its unit of analysis. To answer this question, he refers to a body of recent scholarship on the *Maria Luz* Incident which some have heralded as the de-Westernising of world history. He claims that this scholarship relies heavily on an area studies approach, and constructs an understanding of Japanese modern history based on its adaption and evolution via Western encounters. He views the *Maria Luz* Incident from the lens of the global history of labour migration and human trafficking. Seaton (Chapter 2) offers another provocative argument to make Japanese Studies relevant in the twenty-first century. He says topics should be identified that not only feature Japan as an important case study on a theme of global relevance, but also in which Japan takes a lead in theoretical discussions and identifying global implications. One such topic is the Japanese concept of 'contents tourism' (tourism induced by works of popular culture). Seaton's chapter discusses how tourism scholars with little prior focus on Asia have started incorporating contents tourism theory into their work on other regions/countries. Ohashi and Ohashi (Chapter 3), meanwhile, scrutinise teaching practices. They shed light on the interrelations of teaching 'Japanese language' and 'Japanese Studies' in an attempt to suggest a new direction addressing current global challenges. Defining 'intercultural learning' as a space where learners position themselves beyond national boundaries and identities, their chapter illustrates some examples of teaching Japanese language and Japanese Studies which maximise the benefits of intercultural learning.

In the final two chapters of the opening part, three emerging scholars from China and Indonesia document a new dynamism in Japanese Studies in their countries. Zou (Chapter 4) claims that the nature of Japanese Studies in China

significantly mirrors key trends of Sino-Japanese relations. She also highlights the domestic challenges faced by Chinese scholars in researching Japan and presenting their research against the backdrop of fluctuating Sino-Japanese relations. Pratama and Purnomo (Chapter 5) argue the importance of maintaining a balance in the patron–client relationship between Indonesia and Japan within academic contexts, as well as incorporating insights from Indonesia in the study of Japan.

The second part (Chapters 6–8) focuses on ageing and demographic change. Although Tokyo is branded as a city of youth and hope after the 2020 Olympic Games, Snee (Chapter 6) points out that in the coming decades well over a third of its residents will be over 65. Governmental bodies have been actively seeking solutions for anticipated ageing-related problems for decades. One solution being discussed, highlighted by the 2020 Olympics, is the implementation of universal design in public spaces for easier access; in other words, making Tokyo ‘barrier-free’. Snee critically analyses the history and current implementation of the concept, pointing out that it seems to be increasingly commercialised. In the next two chapters, while engaging discussion of the government’s policy for combating an ageing society, both Navallo and Jabar look at elderly care from the perspective of Filipino immigrants in Japan. Navallo (Chapter 7) discusses Filipino carers of the elderly in long-term care facilities. She explores care as embodied interaction in the context of institutional elderly care settings in Japan. She finds that the relational nature of care expands the institutionalised individuals’ experience of long-term care. Moreover, caregiving by Filipino workers expands elderly people’s interactions with foreign migrants to a more intimate nature. Jabar (Chapter 8), meanwhile, examines the role of a Catholic Church-based organisation of Filipino immigrants (specifically, Filipina wives of Japanese husbands) in Japan providing care to their fellow Filipino immigrants. Care in this regard is not only health care but also spiritual, psychological and financial care. He argues that issues of health, ageing and death should be dealt with beyond their biomedical aspects, meaning that there are cultural nuances surrounding such issues, and only those who understand the culture can provide for the specific health, ageing and death care needs of immigrants.

The third part (Chapters 9–14) discusses migration and mobility in both historical and contemporary contexts. Both Paichadze and Hyun look at human mobility in the early post-Second World War period. Paichadze (Chapter 9) focuses on returnees from Sakhalin who arrived in Japan from the 1960s, presenting the characteristics of each period of repatriation/return. Based on extensive interviews with the first and especially second generation of Sakhalin returnees, she analyses their experiences upon returning to Japan and the processes of their integration into Japanese society. Further, Hyun (Chapter 10) explores the lives of Japanese women in South Korea during the postwar period, and considers their movement and settlement while tracing the political negotiations between Japan and South Korea. He further points out the postwar landscape of the Japanese empire, distorted by the consequences of colonial policy involving the Japanese and Koreans colliding with the ‘border’ of the nation-state.

The next two accounts by Horiguchi and Rahman discuss the non-Japanese population in Japan. Drawing on interviews with previous Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme participants, Horiguchi (Chapter 11) reveals how these Western scholars are ‘wanted’ as symbols of ‘internationalisation’ and hence enjoy ‘privileged’ status in Japan, while finding themselves marginalised in scholarly communities at global and local levels. By critically examining how these JET-alumni scholars perform and negotiate their academic and personal identities, she highlights tensions and connections between the ‘core’ and ‘peripheries’ of the twenty-first century academic ‘world system’, as well as those between area studies and disciplines in the humanities and social sciences. Rahman (Chapter 12) provides an analysis of the opportunities and challenges faced by Bangladeshi language students, one of the smaller national groupings in Japan. He argues that language students are subject to economic exploitation by migration agents due to their lack of knowledge about language school admission, visa applications and settlement in Japan. Rahman claims that student migration comprises a significant subset of international migration, and contributes to previous debates centring on the brain drain/gain in the sending and receiving countries.

The next two chapters discuss Japanese people going abroad. Steele (Chapter 13) examines the Supreme Court of Japan’s overseas training and research programme since the early 2000s, hosted by Melbourne Law School’s Asian Law Centre. Analysing the visiting judges’ responses to a questionnaire about their experiences, she considers the potential longer-term benefits to the Japanese judiciary that such a programme offers, and also the challenges inherent in engaging in meaningful judicial and intellectual cross-cultural exchange. Klien’s ethnography (Chapter 14) documents the trajectories of Japanese individuals who have relocated to Europe and opt for self-created work in the creative sector. She argues that Japanese migrants relocate for reasons of self-growth, inspiration and change. While expressing high satisfaction with their daily lives, having eschewed conventional careers and familial engagement, they also mention their sense of liminality and pressure to turn their lives overseas into a personally fulfilling experience. By focusing on transnational Japanese who seek to pursue global careers, yet refer to Japan in multiple ways, her chapter explores new directions for Japanese Studies beyond Japan.

The last part (Chapters 15–16) is about the environment and proposes ways of locating Japanese experiences within transnational/global contexts. Avenell (Chapter 15) examines the transnational activism born out of Japan’s domestic experience with industrial pollution as a possible new frontier in the study of Japan. Moreover, Japan’s experience with industrial pollution and other environmental challenges can potentially enrich our understanding of these issues within our own backyards, as well as globally. He argues that one departure point for producing new knowledge on Japan may lie in a conceptual dissolution of the rigid borders of the country, and an embrace of regional and global perspectives. Meanwhile, Ogawa (Chapter 16) argues that Japan has assumed a central position within global discourses on energy since the 2011 catastrophic

earthquake and tsunami that caused radiation leakage from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. One of the major issues Japanese society faces today is revising its energy policy and production. He documents a strong grass-roots movement towards renewability and sustainability, and for greater local control over energy production and more extensive public participation. People referred to such renewable-energy-derived electricity as ‘community power’.

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