

# Promotion and Reception of Japanese Culture in Bulgaria

Gergana R. Petkova

*Sofia University (St Kliment Ohridski), Bulgaria*

## Introduction

Forming a positive image of a foreign nation is a time- and effort-consuming task. It usually takes decades, if not centuries, for a foreign culture to be understood and appreciated, especially if the geographic, political, historical and philosophic backgrounds of the two countries are so disparate that there is hardly any common ground from which to begin. Although generations may invest in a shared vision for the future, there is never any guarantee for successful cultural exchange.

Yet it seems that Japan and Bulgaria have found a common path. After a century of cross-cultural communication and straightforward bilateral policies, the two countries today have a strong mutual understanding. Even in times of crucial political changes, economic crises and morals and values turmoil, they have continued to interact and to search for commonalities.

The present work will outline the process of promotion and reception of Japanese culture in Bulgaria. First the process of Bulgaria's familiarization with Japanese culture will be described in order to show how for over a century the Bulgarian public has developed a strong affinity for Japanese culture. The study will then illustrate the main cornerstones on the path to the construction of Japan's positive reputation in Bulgaria, despite significant geographic distances and outstanding cultural differences. Then, the present state of the promotion process will be described, whereas the roles of scientific and educational institutions, as well as various media and professional organizations will be outlined.

Further, the reception of Japanese culture in Bulgaria will be illustrated by analyzing the data from four surveys conducted among the Bulgarian public in the last two years. These may be considered as the first attempts to judge Japan-Bulgaria cultural interaction in quantitative terms. The author initiated and conducted the surveys with the help of students from the Japanese Studies Section at Sofia University. Summarized here for the first time, the results may shed light on issues of cross-cultural communication and serve as a starting point for further research on the reception of Japanese culture in Bulgaria.

## 1. Promotion of Japanese culture in Bulgaria

There is very little written on the promotion and reception of Japanese culture in Bulgaria. Undoubtedly credit should be paid to Boyka Tsigova, the first scholar to undertake such research. Tsigova has made significant contributions regarding the characteristics of this process, mainly referring to the reception of Japanese literature in Bulgaria in her numerous works (cf. Tsigova 2004, 2005, 2006). Recently, Evgeny Kandilarov has focused on the historical and political bilateral relations between Japan and Bulgaria (Kandilarov 2005a, 2005b, 2006, 2009), while Gergana Petkova has researched folklore (Petkova 2005, 2010b). These works are referred to in the sections below.

### 1.1. History of promotion

The first book on Japan written by a Bulgarian appeared in 1906. In his travel diary, the tradesman Anton Bozukov shares his impressions of Japan, its culture and people and even tries to compare what he saw and experienced in Japan to the cultural and social realities in his home country. As Tsigova states, “the great achievement of this work is not only that it is the first travel diary about Japan published in Bulgaria, but also that it offers the very interesting, personal and deep insights of the author” (Tsigova 2004: 379). Moreover, Bozukov initiated a trend of Bulgarians writing travel diaries on Japan. Although the next example came half a century or so later, it still indicates that experiencing Japan first-hand and later contemplating its culture in written form seems to have caught the attention of Bulgarians.

Political interaction between Bulgaria and Japan began in 1927, and the first diplomatic relations were established in 1939 (Kandilarov 2005a). The first literary translations appeared in the 1930s. In this way, political and cultural interaction went hand in hand. The first translations of Japanese poetry from other languages were *Yamato-no Uta* (Песни от Ямато) and *Hana-no Eda* (Цъфнала вейка) in the collection *Blue times* (Сини часове, 1937) by Nikola Jerov and *Butterflies* (Пеперуди, 1938) by Hristo Derijan. Published in 1941, Svetoslav Minkov’s book *Japanese Literature: Beginnings, Development, Authors* (Японска литература: начало-развитие- представители, 1941) was the first introduction of Japanese literature published in Bulgaria.

During the 1950s and 60s, the Bulgarian public became acquainted with the translated works of Tokunaga Sunao, Matsumoto Seicho, Abe Kobo, Kawabata Yasunari, and others. These works were translated from other European languages but their contribution to cross-cultural communication should not be underestimated. Additionally, economic, technological, scientific and cultural exchange between Japan and Bulgaria expanded and gradually formed the background for the breakthrough in the bilateral relations in the 1970s.

It is the 1970 Osaka World Exposition that became a crucial turning point in Japan-Bulgaria bilateral relations (Kandilarov 2005b). The 1970s are marked by

very intensive cultural exchange between the two countries, thanks in part to the active policy of Lyudmila Jivkova, who was director of the Committee for Art and Culture at that time. Kandilarov calls the 1970s “an apogee” in the relations between the two countries (2006). Despite the Cold War and political differences, Bulgaria and Japan began interacting regularly in various spheres, such as technology, trade, and art; knowledge transfer and skills exchange that began in the 1970s continue up to the present day.

Between 1972 and 1994, seven books were written on Japan by Bulgarian writers, journalists, diplomats and Japanese studies specialists. These are the insights of people who visited Japan and wished to share their first-hand experiences. Following in the footsteps of Anton Bozukov, the authors introduce Japan to the Bulgarian public with thoughtful admiration as they discuss topics ranging from traditional to modern society, and from literature to robotics<sup>1</sup>. The following works were highly appreciated by readers, as they made Japan accessible to Bulgarians: *Japan Notes* by Milan Milanov (Японски бележник, 1972), *Japan: Contemporary Issues* by Todor Petkov (Япония: съвременни проблеми и дилемата, 1975), *Japan as It Is* by Marko Semov (Япония като за Япония, 1984), *Zen Aesthetics and the Japanese Art Tradition* by Воука Tsigova (Дзен естетиката и японската художествена традиция, 1988), *The Art of Ikebana* by Rima Mirska (Изкуството икебана, 1988), *Japan: From Katana to Artificial Intellect* by Nacho Papazov (Япония: от самурайския меч до изкуствения интелект, 1989), and *Following the Brush* by Tsvetana Krasteva (По следите на четката, 1994).

Because of their power to raise public awareness of Japan’s culture and achievements, these books collectively functioned to increase reception of Japanese culture during this period. They also signify the intensive cooperation and cultural exchange of the 1970s and the 1980s. In 1977, the first literary works translated directly from Japanese were introduced to the Bulgarian public: *Yuki Guni* and *Senba-Zuru* by Kawabata Yasunari were translated by Tsigova and Stoev and were published together in 1977, thanks to the first generation of Japanese studies specialists who graduated from Russian universities and formed the Japanese studies core in Bulgaria.

In the next 25 years, the translation efforts of Japanese studies specialists like Tsigova, Silvia Popova, Neli Chalakova, Dora Barova, Tsvetana Krasteva, Todor Dichev, and others introduced the works of Akutagawa Ryunosuke, Oe Kenzaburo, Tanizaki Junichiro, Tsuboi Sakae, Ibuse Masuji, Mishima Yukio, Shiga Naoya, Arishima Takeo, Sei Shonagon, Gofukakusa-no-Nijo, Zeami, and many others. These works represent not only various genres and span from classical times to the present but also manage to give an insight into the Japanese philosophy, aesthetics, social issues, cultural identity and trans-cultural values. They are not simply “direct translations”, but rather “direct bridges” to Japan which are being crossed with much

---

<sup>1</sup> Details on the contents of the books can be found in Tsigova (2004: 380-381).

appreciation by Bulgarian readers even today.

A survey project conducted by Japanese studies students in 2010 on Japan-related sources at the Bulgarian National Library showed that there are more than 350 titles of books on Japan in Bulgaria. These include translations of literary works, research, and case-studies from Japanese and other languages, as well as a good number of original works written by Bulgarian authors. In the last decade, there has also been an increase in the publication of such books, in response to Bulgarians' steady, keen interest in Japan.

The change of the Bulgarian political system in 1989 opened up even more possibilities for cooperation and bilateral relations. Many Japanese specialists come to Bulgaria under the auspices of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) to promote their culture in affiliated institutions around the country. Various investment projects foster Bulgarian economic growth, financial support from the Japanese government facilitates the transition from one economic model to a new one and, last but not least, many Bulgarians receive the opportunity to specialize in Japan and share their experiences when they return. Japan has indeed contributed much to the development of the country and this is highly valued by Bulgarians. The annual Japanese Culture Days, organized by the Embassy of Japan in Sofia, offer numerous opportunities to see and experience traditional and contemporary Japan and these events have always attracted many visitors.

Following this period of very active intercultural communication, the relations between these two countries continue to be friendly and the Bulgarian government continues to place high priority on Japan-Bulgaria relations (Kandilarov 2006). Also of great import is that Japan has gained a very special place in the hearts of Bulgarians.

## 1.2. Present state

In response to the Bulgarian public's increasing awareness of, and interest in, Japan, more and more institutions offer various ways to experience Japanese culture. Private language schools offering Japanese are on the rise. Culture-experience clubs like *Urasenke* and *ikebana*, martial arts associations (for *karate*, *aikido*, and *sumo*, for example), internet forums for young people interested in *manga* and *anime*, and *haiku* competitions, for example, are also increasing. It seems that after being introduced to Japanese culture, more and more Bulgarians wish to include it in their everyday lives. This is why there are a great number of state and private institutions working to provide more opportunities to engage with Japan and Japanese culture.

In discussing such institutions, it is logical to begin with Sofia University "St Kliment Ohridski", the sole institution where Japanese language and culture is taught as a major. Established in 1888, the university is the oldest and still the largest higher education institution in Bulgaria. It encompasses 16 faculties, and offers 99 majors in the humanities and the sciences. The first public course in Japanese language was held here in 1967. Following more than two decades of successful education on

Japan, the MA program in Japanese studies was finally established in 1990. It was a five-year course offering students the possibility to become specialists both in Japanese language and in Japanese studies (half of the curriculum consisted of subjects such as Japanese history, politics, and literature, and half consisted of language related courses).

With the introduction of the European framework for the development of higher education, known as the Bologna system<sup>2</sup>, Sofia University was forced to reorganize the program into a 4-year BA course that could be followed by an MA course in Asian Studies. In response to the newest trends in higher education, subjects such as sociology, international relations, ethnography, economy and management, and issues of contemporary Japan were included to broaden the scope of professional knowledge. In this way, the students pair intensive Japanese language study with a solid foundation in general studies so that they are able to pursue further professional development in related areas. Recent graduates are able to pass level 1 (25%) and level 2 (40%) of the Japanese language proficiency test by the time of graduation and apply their knowledge to other fields they find interesting. Many of them find employment in tourism, international relations, education, or academic research. There are around 15 graduates each year, most of whom try to pursue a career with some relation to Japan. However, the possibilities for employment are shrinking each year, so new graduates need to either continue their education or find employment that does not necessarily involve proficiency in Japanese language and culture.

As well-educated specialists nurtured by Sofia University who are fluent in Japanese and knowledgeable about a vast scope of information about Japan and its culture, these young graduates become the new generation that promotes Japanese culture in Bulgaria. During their four years of education, students take a variety of Japan-related courses in addition to language study, so that they are able to pursue their personal interests and strengths when they go on the job market. Therefore, regardless of the type of employment, they can apply what they learned to their work. Because of that, they progress quickly in their careers and are very well placed on the labor market both in Bulgaria and abroad.

Yet Sofia University plays two more important roles in the promotion of Japanese culture in Bulgaria. The first one is the open non-degree course held in the evenings, which has been running successfully for more than forty years. This two-year course is open to Bulgarians who wish to learn Japanese and become acquainted with Japan either because of personal interests or for business purposes. Each year, around 10-15 people enroll. Among them are young specialists in various fields who wish to learn from the Japanese experience, middle-aged people who have a strong

---

<sup>2</sup> The Bologna system suggests higher education be acquired in three stages: the Bachelor's degree is earned in 3 or 4 years, the Master's is earned in 1 or 2 years and the PhD takes up to 3 years. In this way it is difficult to maintain a 5-year Master course without any possibility for a Bachelor's degree. Although the application of the Bologna system to fields related to Asian languages and studies in particular has been criticized by many scholars, the topic will not be further discussed in this paper.

interest in Japan due to the intensive cultural exchange between the two countries, and fellows planning to go to Japan to study, work or do research or who have come back and wish to deepen their understanding and competency in Japanese language and culture.

The third contribution Sofia University makes is research. Among its six-member full-time staff there are two professors, three senior assistant professors and one junior assistant professor. Professor Tsigova conducts research on Japanese philosophy, aesthetics and classical literature; Professor Stefanov researches Japanese politics, economy and management; Senior Assistant Professor Petkova researches Japanese traditional culture, ethnography, classical literature, and folklore; Senior Assistant Professor Holodovich researches contemporary Japanese literature; Senior Assistant Professor Ivanova researches Japanese history; and Junior Assistant Professor Andreev researches Japanese language, linguistics and teaching methodologies.

To promote Japanese culture, these faculty members disseminate research results, participate in academic events and international cooperation, and carry out projects with other specialists and students. In 2009, the Japanese Studies Section hosted an international conference on Japanese studies in which participants from leading European universities took part; to commemorate its 20th anniversary in 2010, the Japanese Studies Section organized an international symposium, where specialists from all around Bulgaria gathered to share their achievements in regard to the study and promotion of Japanese language and culture.

Although it is only twenty years old, the Japanese Studies Section at Sofia University has managed to establish a strong base for research and promotion of Japan in Bulgaria. And despite initial hardships related to the unstable economic situation, political turbulence, and overall social changes, the Japanese Studies Section has endured to produce the first generation of Bulgarian “home-grown” specialists in Japanese studies. It has also continued to successfully promote Japanese culture and language through the academic research and educational activities.

The Japanese Studies Section has benefited enormously from the support of the Japanese government, which has been dispatching Japanese language specialists and library supplements to Sofia University for twenty years. Today, the library room at the Centre for Eastern Languages and Cultures houses more than 5,000 volumes on Japan, and the progress of the students in the BA program depends on the collaboration and cooperation of the native Japanese visiting staff, who are dispatched by the Japan Foundation.

In recent years, many initiatives to promote Japanese culture among Bulgarians have been set up by active Japanese Studies students. In February 2011, students were included in a project on traditional culture in which props introducing Japanese traditional culture were collected and exhibited at the Centre for Eastern Languages and Cultures. Another event is the annual Japanese Culture Day (Nihon Bunka-sai), organized entirely by students. The Bunka-sai makes it possible for the general

public to get a closer look at Japan and even experience it directly via workshops in origami, calligraphy, games, and cuisine, for example. Each year the number of visitors grows, but this year an even greater number of visitors came. Through their participation in the festival, we managed to contribute funds to the victims of the March 11 Great East Japan Earthquake, in addition to our regular activities.

Of course, Sofia University is not the only place that promotes Japanese culture. There are many other institutions with similar goals. Among these is the Veliko Tarnovo University (VTU), which has had a regular BA course in Applied Linguistics in Japanese for more than fifteen years. In 1994, VTU also established a Centre for Japanese Language and Culture with a library section. Although the course is focused on language, students there organize cultural festivals to introduce Japanese culture to Bulgarians living in the north-east part of the country. The effectiveness of such events seems to grow each year, and attract more and more attention.

Among other key institutions that promote Japan in Bulgaria is the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, where specialists on Japan conduct research and disseminate results. Independent scholars affiliated with other educational and research institutions, particularly fellows of the Japanese government who have visited Japan for research purposes, also collaborate. These include professionals in architecture, international relations and politics, as well as economists, engineers, medical specialists, museum workers, government experts, and other specialists. Most researchers have been able to go to Japan through various programs offered by the Japanese government, the Ministry of Education, The Japan Foundation, JICA, Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, and bilateral agreements between universities and institutions.

The incorporation of Japanese language and culture classes at schools is also an important achievement. The first school to introduce such classes is the William Gladstone School N 18 in Sofia, where for more than 15 years there has been an intensive Japanese language program. The school has recently introduced Japanese language classes from the elementary level and in this way became the first state school in Bulgaria and in Europe with an officially approved and accredited program for Japanese language study from the first up to twelfth grade. The school has also established a Centre for Japanese Culture on its premises, where tea-ceremony, origami, games and traditional culture classes take place.

Private language teaching companies have also included Japanese in their scope, and some of them even offer workshops and cultural activities as well. Other means to promote Japanese culture in Bulgaria include clubs and associations related to Japan. Among these are the Chado Urasenke club, which introduces Japanese tea ceremony (est. in 1992), the Soga *ikebana* club (est. in 1992), the Centre Ikuo Hirayama (est. in 2009), and sports associations for activities such as *go* and *shogi*, *karate*, *sumo*, *aikido*, and *judo*. Through such activities Bulgarians can learn about and experience Japan first-hand and incorporate Japanese culture into their lives. In addition, a number of publishing houses have recently begun to print works on Japan after a period of hiatus. Publications include translations from Japanese and other

languages, and research results from within the country.

The role of the mass media in promoting Japan cannot be underestimated either. For example, Bulgarian National Television (BNT) and the Bulgarian National Radio (BNR) both introduce Japan and its culture through various programs like *Multi-cultural dialogues* on BNR. BNT and BNR bring Japan closer to the Bulgarian people through programs that include information on scientific achievements, economic growth, nature, sports and other topics<sup>3</sup>.

## 2. Reception of Japanese culture in Bulgaria

As a result of more than a one-hundred-year history of cultural exchange and thanks to the institutions and individuals mentioned above, Bulgarian people nowadays have not only information, but also interest in Japan. In order to study how Bulgarians perceive Japanese culture, the author conducted surveys in 2010 and 2011 with the help of Japanese studies students. By directly surveying members of the Bulgarian public, the researchers managed to gauge where to invest efforts for the promotion of Japan in Bulgaria in future. These surveys are the first of their kind in Bulgaria, and are also the first attempt to evaluate the process of promotion and reception of Japanese culture in quantitative terms.

### 2.1. “The image of Japan in Bulgaria” – Survey 1

In the first survey, “The image of Japan in Bulgaria,” 145 participants took part (see Appendix 1)<sup>4</sup>. They were asked ten questions, most of which included a free listing answer option, so that one could express his/her own opinion in his/her own words. The free-answer results were then summarized and grouped in order to facilitate a more objective analysis of the data.

For more than half of the participants, the first impression of Japan is associated with traditional culture. For one-fifth, images of cutting-edge technologies and development come to mind first. This should come as no surprise, considering that traditional Japanese culture has been promoted in literary translations, Japanese technology is highly visible in the media and on the market, and the research and institutional activities have been made known to the Bulgarian public over the past few decades.

Further, the participants almost without fail point out elements of traditional Japanese culture that are still alive today. Some uncertainty is seen in regard to *yakuza* and *geisha*, which are associated mostly with Japan in the past. Another

---

<sup>3</sup> The journalist Daniela Kaneva, working for the Bulgarian National Television, has been nationally acknowledged as a specialist on Japan. Her reports have reached virtually almost every Bulgarian family for more than thirty years.

<sup>4</sup> The full list of questions and answers can be found in Appendix 1.



interesting point is the question on Japanese companies. Not only are Bulgarians very well-informed about major Japanese companies, they rarely mistake them with companies from other Asian countries, and are even familiar with small-scale companies that produce goods related to their personal interests, such as IT and automotive businesses.

Although less than half of the survey participants had read a book on Japan, it is still impressive that nearly 45% of them have done so. And even if not all of them could remember a title, the works of few authors (like James Clavel or Marko Semov) were named repeatedly. Movies are also powerful promoters of Japan in Bulgaria: more than 65% report they watch Japanese movies. How and where they view these is another point of interest. For the last twenty years, there has been a Japanese Movie Week as a part of the Japanese Culture Days, which is organized by the Japanese embassy and sponsored mainly by the Japanese government. Despite the fact that it is only in selected cinemas in Sofia for just ten days, this movie week provides Bulgarian people the chance to see both masterpieces of Japanese cinematography and recent works of young, contemporary directors. Additionally, all of Hayao Miyazaki's animated films, which are regarded as means for promotion of Japanese culture amongst the younger generation in particular, have become available on DVD in Bulgaria in the past seven years.

Regarding Japanese food, more than a half of the participants reported that they had tried it and two thirds of them liked it. In fact for the last ten years, more and more restaurants featuring Japanese cuisine have opened for business. Most are *sushi*-bars, but the range of foods available improves each year. In the center of Sofia, for example, the chain restaurant "Happy" offers a rich assortment of dishes, including *sushi* (*maki*-, *nigiri*-, and *chirashi*- varieties), *sashimi*, *miso*-soup, *tofu*, *eda-mame*, desserts and other selections. Just fifteen years ago, few Bulgarians would have been able to answer this question affirmatively because there were very few occasions and places to encounter Japanese cuisine.

To fully appreciate the significance of this shift, it is important to consider the vast difference between Bulgarian and Japanese cuisine, particularly regarding the consumption of raw seafood. Because raw fish and seafood are not a part of traditional Bulgarian cuisine, it is sometimes difficult for Bulgarians to appreciate Japanese food at first bite. But the fact that Japanese food restaurants have been flourishing in the last five years or so shows that once accustomed to it, Bulgarians do enjoy it wholeheartedly. *Wasabi*, *nori*, *mirin*, and *shoga* can be found in stores, and people are increasingly daring to prepare *sushi* at home.

In order to check how much information about the cultural exchange between the two countries circulates in society, the participants were asked to point out things that make Bulgaria known in Japan. A large percentage of them correctly pointed out the role of Bulgarian yoghurt and the *sumo*-wrestler Kaloyan Mahlianov (Koto-ōshū). Indeed, the long-term presence of a Bulgarian product like yoghurt on the Japanese market is a unique opportunity not only for Bulgaria to become known in Japan, but also for Bulgarians to share some part of daily life with Japanese people.

The role of the cultural exchange can also be traced in other answers given by the participants. For example, sports and arts are a means of cross-cultural communication knowing no language barrier.

The last part of the questionnaire aimed to elucidate Bulgarians' overall image of Japan and Japanese people by asking the participants to describe Japan and the Japanese in their own words. Although the adjectives used vary, answers can be grouped into a few categories. In regard to Japan, answers fell into the categories of exotic, gorgeous, harmonious and traditional. Among the given answers of all 145 participants, only one adjective with a slightly negative connotation appeared, indicating that Bulgarians hold Japan in high regard. This high opinion is also reflected in answers related to people and society, which were also grouped in four categories: disciplined, dutiful, hardworking and polite. Few Bulgarians would use these terms to describe Bulgarian realities, although these characteristics may be considered desirable for a progressive society.

On the whole, as the survey results show Bulgarians are very aware of Japan and follow its development closely. They appreciate the traditional and take interest in many aspects of contemporary Japanese culture. And despite the fact that this survey did not investigate this issue directly, it might be suggested that among many countries around the world, Japan has a very special place in the hearts of Bulgarian people.

## 2.2. “Knowledge about Japanese traditional culture” – Survey 2

The second survey conducted at the end of 2010 included 87 participants and aimed to gauge how visible Japanese traditional culture is to the Bulgarian public (see Appendix 2)<sup>5</sup>. The survey consisted of two parts: first, participants were asked to indicate which of 15 elements of Japanese culture that they know something about and second, they were asked to choose from two possibilities which one was more likely to be found in Japan.

The results clearly show that almost all of the interviewees were familiar with *sushi*, *sake*, *kimono* and *sumo*. Promotion of Japanese cuisine in the recent years in restaurants around Bulgaria may be partially responsible for Bulgarians' acquaintance with *sushi* and *sake*: as mentioned in the previous study, a fair number have tried and enjoyed Japanese food in general. Another interesting point is the role of *sumo* in cultural exchange between the two countries, because this is not a popular sport in Bulgaria. Yet people are aware of it and this is mostly due to the solid performances of Kaloyan Mahlianov in the recent years. It could be said that he not only promotes Bulgarian culture in Japan, but also Japanese culture in Bulgaria; and this is a great achievement for cultural exchange.

The spiritual and philosophical backgrounds of Japan, Zen Buddhism and

---

<sup>5</sup> Full list of questions and answers can be found in Appendix 2.

Shinto are well-known in Bulgaria. Due to literary translations, research, and club activities in recent decades, arts such as *ikebana* and *haiku* are also popular. That the Bulgarian public is well-informed about these aspects of Japanese culture indicates that the efforts of Japanese studies specialists, translators and intellectuals to promote Japanese culture in Bulgaria over the past half century are now bearing fruit. On the other hand, considering that less than a fifth of the interviewees indicated familiarity with *futon*, *geta*, *onsen*, *makura* or *irori*, there is much more to be done in order for Bulgarians to have a more precise picture of Japanese culture.

In the second part of the survey the participants were asked to identify which one out of two possibilities would have been typical for Japan. In this sense the survey examined the Bulgarians' knowledge of Japan and its traditions rather than of contemporary realities. Moreover, the given options opposed elements of traditional ways of life in Bulgaria with those in Japan; thus the survey aimed to assess to what extent the Bulgarian public can identify Japanese traditions in comparison to Bulgarian traditions. Almost all of the interviewees pointed out that in Japan rice not wheat was considered the staple starch, raw fish was preferred to fried, people rather sat on the floor rather than on chairs, nature was the main theme in art, wooden footwear was more typical than leather, chopsticks and not forks were used, green tea was preferred to black, paper walls were more common than brick walls, New Year was celebrated by more people than Christmas (all of these being opposite according to Bulgarian traditions), the father was the center of the family table, and the sons inherited their parents, not the daughters (which was the case in Bulgaria as well).

Bulgarians were less familiar with the prevalence of straw roofs of the traditional houses over stone roofs, the hearth over floor heating, and the group valued over the individual (where the first and the third differ from Bulgarian historical realities). Only the question regarding the keeping of the family budget prompted a majority of interviewees to give an answer that does not fit the historical evidence in Japan: Bulgarians selected the patriarch as controlling the family funds, as this has been the case in Bulgaria.

Overall, the survey shows that the Bulgarian public is familiar with Japanese culture, which has been made visible in the last decades, and that a keen interest in Japanese culture has been successfully nurtured. Of course, there are still many aspects of Japan and its people that need to be brought closer to Bulgarians and this is the challenge for the new generations of Japanese studies specialists, intellectuals, politicians, diplomats, economists and people working in various spheres.

### **2.3. “Reception of Japanese fairy tales in Bulgaria” – Survey 3**

The third survey on reception of Japanese culture in Bulgaria conducted in 2010 investigates the perception of Japanese fairy tales. The results of this survey have already been published (see Petkova 2010b), but a short outline of the outcomes is given here to broaden the scope of the analysis.

Scholars of folktales from around the world have stated that European and Japanese folktales differ, and that one cannot really compare them because they are not of the same species. Hayao Kawai (2002 [1982]), Lutz Roehrich (1976), Max Luethi (1976), and Rudolf Schenda (1976) carefully examine the commonalities and differences of Japanese and European tales, paying particular attention to the perception of Japanese tales in Europe. They all agree upon a certain degree of misunderstanding of Japanese stories by non-Japanese readers.

The research is based upon the findings of a screening featuring one of the most typical Japanese fairy tales – that of the Crane-wife or *Tsuru-no Ongaeshi*. So far, this tale has not been included in the major collections of Japanese folktales translated into Bulgarian that are known to the public (Bosilek 1995 [1941], Petkova 2009a, Trendafilova 2009 [1974]). Very little is written in Bulgarian on the Japanese folktale in general (Petkova 2005, 2008) and, although there are few studies on the reception of Japanese literature in Bulgaria (Tsigova 1988, 2004, 2005, 2006), folktale reception has not been studied until recently.

The story about the Crane-wife is one of the most popular and beloved Japanese fairy tales. It has links to some mythological motifs in the *Kojiki* (A Record of Ancient Matters) and the *Nihon Shoki* (Chronicles of Japan), and belongs to a group of tales called *irui-nyōbō-tan*, or tales about the non-human bride. The plot can be summarized as follows:

A man saves the life of a crane. The bird transforms into a woman and marries the man. The wife starts weaving; the man sells the woven cloth for a high price. Although the wife asks the man not to watch her while weaving, he peeks into the room to see a weaving crane. Being exposed, the wife returns to her original bird-shape and flies away<sup>6</sup>.

In order to study this tale it is necessary to recall some important characteristics of all stories of this type, such as types of marriage, taboos, the separation of the couple, and transformation.

In the Japanese folk narrative, there are three types of marriage-tales: the human-animal marriage (based on mythology); the desired child marriage (based on initiation rites) and the reality marriage (based on existing human relationships). Ozawa states that the marriage between a man and an animal-wife whose true shape is disclosed is a genuine Japanese tale as there are very few similar examples in other folktale traditions (those that exist are found mainly in Korea), and no direct analogues in the world collections or in the Aarne-Thompson Index<sup>7</sup> exist (Ozawa 1981b: 431-439). On these grounds, one may say that these tales could be considered

---

<sup>6</sup> In many versions she dies in her flight.

<sup>7</sup> The Aarne-Thompson Index is a classification system for folk tales which is applied worldwide to enable the comparative study of the folklore.

“typical Japanese fairy tales” and are, undoubtedly, the most profoundly studied ones (Ozawa 1994:200).

The end of these tales is particularly interesting because they culminate in the separation of the couple. Ozawa calls such an end “die melancholische Stimmung des Abschiednehmens” or the melancholic mood of the farewell (Ozawa 1993: 489). This end evokes a very controversial reception in Europe; because the lack of a “logical” end to the tale leaves the story seemingly open and unresolved, western readers find it unsettling and incomplete (ibid.:135). Hayao Kawai explains this as the reaction of the European public to a story resulting in nothingness (*mu*) (Kawai 2002 [1982]). The tale starts as it finishes, and it holds neither anything good nor bad for the male protagonist: all that happens between the two poles of “nothingness” is that the animal, which shows gratitude or good intentions and brings some happiness to the lonely bachelor, is lost to the human beings once they have “touched” the beautiful (also Katō 1998:64).

The plot of these tales is characterised by a broken taboo. The essence of the taboo is usually a visual one, *miru na*, which prohibits looking at the true face or the body of the partner. *Miru na* is of mythological origin, first referring to prohibiting one from gazing on the face of God<sup>8</sup>. Seeing means knowing, and knowledge is a revelation of the sacred nature: this corresponds to the story of Adam and Eve and the apple (Kawai 1977:83). The *miru na* taboo is linked to different female actions such as giving birth, breastfeeding, bathing, weaving, and cooking.

Another specific feature of these tales is the transformation of the animal into a human being. There is no magic in the transformation, and from a socio-historical point of view this is typical for the folklore of earlier societies. Transformation is a very specific and significant element in Japanese tales and many authors have studied it from various angles (Katō 1998; Miller 1987; Petrova 2002; and others). Ozawa concludes that the natural transformation from animal to human in Japanese tales is evocative of the tales of *Naturvoelker* (or tribes at earlier stages of social development), while the impossibility of an enduring co-existence between the man and the animal-bride approximates the Japanese tale to the European: “The transformation of the crane into a woman and back to crane is not a work of god, or any magic, it is simply natural. [...] This natural transformation from animal to human and back to animal is one of the most typical features of the Japanese tales” (Ozawa 1994:141 my translation).

So, here we have remnants of an earlier stage of social development, a closer link to the times of myths and legends, and we can see that the Japanese tale is closer to folk beliefs (see also Dorson 1975:243-248; Petrova 2004:37-38). According to Allan Miller, the bird symbolizes the shamanist tradition (1987:74). Toshio Ozawa

---

<sup>8</sup> In the *Kojiki* the divine pair Izanagi and Izanami also separate because of a broken taboo – according to mythology, Izanagi sees Izanami rotting in the Land of Death. Watching his wife without her consent brings the final separation upon the couple.

considers the tale of the Crane-wife to be representative of how nature was conceptualized in traditional, agricultural Japan (Ozawa 1996:631).

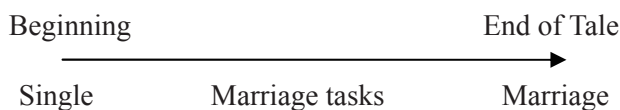
Generally, Europeans find the tale of the Crane-wife unfinished; they expect a continuation of the plot in which the man searches for his wife in case she has not died (Ozawa 1994: 135). Seeking the lost wife is very atypical for Japan; in fact the only exception is the tale “The sky-nymph” (*tennyo*). The aim of the survey conducted in 2010 was to find out to what extent this “misunderstanding” of Japanese folklore is true for Bulgarians.

The screening of the opinions was carried out among seventy randomly-chosen members of society belonging to different age groups and with different occupations, who had no direct connection to Japan. Demographic information regarding the gender, age and occupation of each participant was gathered at the end. The participants in the survey were asked to listen to or read the story, then answer four questions, only the third of which was open:

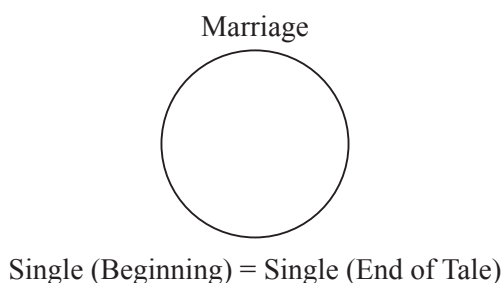
1. Is this the end of the story, according to you? Yes/No
2. Did you expect a different ending? Yes/No
3. If yes, what kind?
4. Did you like the story? Yes/No

Overall, the public liked the tale (52/65), while only 13 participants didn't like the story (5 didn't answer). However, most interviewees considered the tale unfinished (44/70). Only 26 accepted that the story ends in the way it was told, and 41 expected a different ending. Nineteen of these use the word “happy” or “a happy ending” to describe their expectations. An action on the part of the male character was also commonly expected (17), although a few respondents expected action on the part of the female character (7). To summarize, the Bulgarian public basically expected a happy ending that was the result of some action by the male character. However, they liked the story even though it did not meet their expectations.

In order to analyze the results more fully, it is necessary to recall a few very important conclusions offered by different schools in folklore studies. Ozawa (1994) uses structural approach to illustrate two types of plot development: a story with linear development and a clear conclusion is called *kanketsusei* in Japanese and refers to the European model, while the circular plot development with a return to the beginning is called *kaikisei*, and refers to the Japanese model (Ozawa 1994: 219-222). Similar findings about the circular model are given by Petkova (2010b).



**Fig. 1** European Linear Model



**Fig. 2** Japanese Circular Model

In other words, marriage in European tales forms the endpoint, whereas in Japanese tales it implies a new beginning as the story comes full circle and ends where it has started. In this sense, a possible explanation of the controversial reception in Japan and in Europe, according to Ozawa's structural study, could be the expectations of the readers: the European public, exposed to European tales with a happy marriage in the end, expects to hear it also in the Japanese version, while the Japanese reader used to tales with circular structure does not anticipate a different *finale*.

Therefore, considering the survey results within Ozawa's framework, it seems that the Bulgarian interviewees are indeed not accustomed to such circular plot development. This is why the tale sounds unfinished to them and they expected another ending. In his *Morphology of the folktale*, the prominent structuralist Vladimir Propp (2001 [1969]) defines 31 functions in the plot development of fairy tales, where marriage falls under function No. XXXI and is considered the final point in plot development. So Propp, forming his theory on the basis of European fairy tales, also suggests a conclusion in the form of a happy marriage.

In her research on the applicability of Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* to Japanese fairy tales, Petkova discusses to what extent and under what circumstances the structural approach can be implemented to analyze Japanese fairy tales (Petkova 2009b). Petkova considers the taboo as a task (double meaning of functions), and the task is undertaken but ends with a negative result (the hero fails to accomplish the task). This is marked Pneg according to Propp's morphology. In the end, the plot finishes with a contrary result in the last function "marriage and acquisition of riches" – Cв contr. Therefore, the tale about the Crane-wife could have the following

sequence of Propp's functions: i Д Γ Z JI 3 Pneg C<sub>B</sub> contr or functions number XII – XIII – XIV – XIX – XXV – XXVI – XXXI.

Function	Propp No.	Contents	Japanese text
I		Initial situation	Most versions mention a single poor man.
Д	XII	Male character tested by donor (mercy tested by saving a bird in need)	男が鶴の命を助けると
Γ	XIII	Male character responds to the donor	
Z	XIV	Hero is given the magic object – typical Z9: helper offering herself to the hero	鶴が女に変身して男に嫁してくる
JI	XIX	Initial lack is resolved – man is no longer single and poor	鶴の嫁は機を織り、仕上がった反物を男に売らせて家に富をもたらす
3	XXV	Wife sets the male character a task – not to watch	嫁が、機を織る姿を見るな、といていたにもかかわらず
Pneg	XXVI	Task not accomplished by man – man fails to keep the promise	男は、機織部屋をのぞき、鶴が羽根で布を織っているのを目撃する
C <sub>B</sub> contr	XXXI	Acquisition of riches and wedding lead to a contrary result – Wife changes back into crane–shape and leaves; man is single and poor again. No successful marriage.	正体を知られた嫁は、鶴の姿に戻って飛び去る

When analysing the tale in this way, we discover that the story of the crane wife is perfectly in line with Propp's functions: on a morphological level, the tale is an ordinary fairy tale, following the sequence of functions suggested by Propp. Nevertheless, although the line is followed the functions are realised negatively or controversially in the Japanese tale, which again is suggested by Propp as a possible realization of the functions (Propp 2001 [1969]: Ch. III). The negative and contrary results determined by the last two functions come as unexpected to the reader. Although the European reader expects a positive result, the negative and the controversial functions make him feel the tale is somehow incomplete. In other words, the European reader who is exposed to tales that end with function XXXI in its positive realization is not at ease with this function bearing a contrary sign.



But the interpretation of the reception of this tale has another possible viewpoint. The Jungian psychologist Hayao Kawai puts forth another thesis. He states that Europeans do not understand the Japanese tale as a result of the European masculine consciousness, which is antithetical to the female soul of the Japanese people; he asserts that a tale resulting in nothingness (*mu*) is easier to accept for Japanese, who have female consciousness (Kawai 2002 [1984]).

When we consider these theories together, we can see where the confusion originates. First, from a socio-historical point of view, Japanese tales are closer to the tales of *Naturvoelker* because of the preserved link to nature. The animal brides transform to human beings without any help, while in European tales we have a forced transformation usually by an act of magic. Second, Japanese folktales highlight different philosophical ideals, such as concepts of nothingness (*mu*) and the beauty of the transitional *aware*. Third, the plot development of Japanese fairy tales can be conceptualized as a circle, while the development of European stories is viewed as a line. A contrary realisation of Propp's last function is also something with which European readers are not accustomed.

These are the main reasons the reception of Japanese fairy tales differs in Bulgaria. But despite the fact that many of the participants in the survey expected a different, predominantly “happy” ending, they generally liked the tale. For Bulgarians, the Japanese culture promoted by a typical Japanese fairy tale might be “strange”, “other”, “different” or *i*, to refer to the same hieroglyph as in *irui-nyōbō*<sup>9</sup>, but it does not necessarily mean unacceptable. Bulgarians might be surprised by the return to the beginning or the lack of a happy ending in this typical Japanese tale, or they may have other expectations for the end such as a reunion of the couple or an action on the part of the male protagonist. They could even reject the circular plot model. Yet they appreciate the tale, showing that cultural differences do not prevent people from enjoying folktales. Differences do not preclude understanding.

## 2.4. “Reception of Japanese folktales in Bulgaria II” – Survey 4

Finally, the results of one more survey will be discussed to illustrate how students who have had some direct exposure to Japanese studies react to Japanese folktales, as opposed to those who had not in the previous study. The scope of this screening is very limited, as it was conducted among 29 first- and second-year students majoring in Japanese studies at Sofia University in the beginning of 2010. The survey was conducted at the end of a one-semester course on Japanese folktales. All questions were open and the students answered them in their own words.

The aim of the survey was to identify which elements of culture appearing in the Japanese folk narrative draw the attention of a foreign public, to which particular features the listener/reader pays attention, and to what extent Japanese traditions are

---

<sup>9</sup> 異類女房

visible in the folktale. The results of the survey are intended to serve as the basis for future research regarding how folklore, in particular folktales, can be used for the introduction of Japanese culture to Bulgarian public and how culture can be visualized through folklore. For this reason, only a part of the results from the screening will be analyzed in the present article, namely those which have relevance to the themes discussed in previous sections.

During the fifteen-week course introducing Japanese folktales, the students became acquainted with many of the ordinary tales from Keigo Seki's collection (*Nihon Mukashi-banashi Shūsei* (1950-1958)), a few examples from the book version of the animated *Manga Nihon Mukashi-banashi*, and nine tales translated into Bulgarian by the author. In addition, students viewed two tales that had been made into movies. Although tales of animals and jokes were also taught, ordinary tales (or fairy tales) prevailed in number. Students discussed and offered their opinions of about 50 tales in total.

In the first part of the questionnaire, students were asked to indicate their favorite tale, the tale with the most unexpected ending, and the tale that most closely resembled a European example. Although the titles vary, it is a point of interest that the tales "The Crane-wife" and "The Picture Wife" appeared most often in answers for the favorite tale. This is relevant because both tales belong to the group of the non-human bride, *irui-nyōbō-tan* (discussed above); and whereas "The Crane-wife" illustrates the circular plot development and the result of nothingness, "The Picture Wife" is a tale which follows a linear plot line with a happy ending.

A natural conclusion from this result is the explicit tendency for the public to feel connected to tales of the non-human bride. It seems possible that what is making an impression on the student public is exactly what Japanese folklorists state about these tales: namely, that they are very typical of Japan and very illustrative of Japanese thinking, philosophy and aesthetics. In this sense, the data supports the suggestion that these stories could be used as good examples in the promotion of Japanese culture to Bulgarians.

The tale "The Picture Wife" was also selected for being close to the European folk narrative because of the happy end, the motifs of the stolen garment and the outwitted royalty, the tasks for the husband, and the linear development of the plot. So on one hand, the tale is representative of the most typical type of Japanese fairy tales; on the other, it simultaneously serves as a bridge between Japanese and European folk narrative. An even closer analogue, as pointed out by students, is the tale *Oba-sute Yama*. In fact, there is a Bulgarian folk narrative that is considerably similar to the plot of this Japanese tale. Only the details concerning the everyday life of the main characters and the historical realities are different. In addition to the similarities in plot and outcome, students cited the happy end and the theme of respect towards the elderly as reasons for describing this tale as similar to European examples.

A happy end as a plot endpoint is the main reason "The Girl without Hands" is also viewed as similar to European tales. In addition to the happy ending, students

point out the motif of love, the image of the evil mother-in-law, and the tasks undertaken by the two main characters for their final reunion as main reasons to consider the tale similar to European folk tales. Some even compare this tale to “Snow White”<sup>10</sup>.

In the next part of the survey, the students were asked to give three nouns indicating the most common elements in Japanese fairy tales. The students gave 86 free answers which could be arranged in several groups. Ranking most numerous were words related to the dramatis personae complex (22), and students distinguished between male and female characters. Female characters were viewed generally as opposed to male characters by simply using the term “woman”; there were occasionally references to outside appearance such as “beauty,” and marital or social status in the cases of “bride” and “princess”. On the other hand, students recalled male characters by social status and occupation, such as “lord”, “farmer”, and “poor man”. Although pursuing this observation falls outside the scope of the present research, it provides an interesting starting point for a gender studies analysis.

Second most numerous were concepts linked to nature, including both living (14) and non-living (6) examples. In the living nature group, animals prevailed over plants (13 versus 1). Although general answers were numerous, the prevalence with which cat and fox are given as representative for the animal characters in Japanese tales is also relevant; in fact, Seki considers tales of the relationship between man and fox as a separate category within Japanese folklore. Non-living examples were mainly linked to water (in general, but also included answers like sea and river). These answers illustrate the importance of water in Japanese fairy tales. Indeed, the presence of water in Japanese folk narrative, created by people living on an archipelago, has been studied from various angles up till now (see Foster 1998, Heindrichs 1984, Mashimo 2002, Mayer 1972, Sawada 1984, Uther 1998). The students correctly notice that the role of water in Japanese tales is significant and memorable; in comparison the forest, which is much more common in Bulgarian tales, appears only occasionally in Japanese tales.

Next were words related to religious and folk beliefs: 17 for deities, *kami*, religion, and supernatural beings. *Oni* is regarded as very representative for the supernatural beings, and although tales about *kappa*, *tengu* or *yamamba* were even more numerous, the image of *oni* seems to have had left a strong impression upon the readers. One reason may be that *oni* is closer to the image of the ogre in the European folklore, while *kappa* or *tengu* have no direct analogues, particularly in Bulgarian folktales.

Elements of everyday life were also numerous. Of 21 answers, 16 referred to rice. The great number of rice-related words stands out; one possible reason for this

---

<sup>10</sup> In fact, the tale “The Girl without Hands” has even closer analogues in the European folk narrative, yet is less known to the general public than the one quoted by the students.

is that the symbolic functions of rice are similar to that of bread in Bulgaria. *Mochi* or *dango* have similar analogues in shape and function in Bulgarian folktales, namely *pitka* (a kind of small, round bread), which was very common in the past. In addition, the rice-field as a main site of action is analogous to the wheat field in Bulgaria, where the main characters meet the antagonists or receive a magic object.

So, this part of the survey showed the tendency of the student public to remember or notice elements of folktales which are characteristic of Japanese culture, yet their symbolic role has analogues in Bulgarian folktales, which made it possible for the audience to remember and somehow juxtapose the props. Things that are difficult to see in relation to Bulgarian examples prove difficult to remember, and were thus very rarely recalled (like *geta*, kitchen utensils, elements of the house's interior, etc.). Therefore, the data from the survey suggest what is relevant and understandable to the reader, providing researchers clues as to how to improve folktale translation in future.

The students were further asked to give three adjectives describing Japanese folk tales in general. The students described it as different, unusual, unique (12); unexpected, surprising, intriguing (10); interesting (11); entertaining and funny (5); and strange (5). In this sense, the largest group of similar adjectives describes the Japanese tale as unusual and surprising to the Bulgarian listener, which leads us back to the conclusions of the previous section. Moreover, regarding the structure of Japanese tales, it was described as cyclic (3), unfinished (2) and short (3). Analyzing the given answers, it becomes clear that the Japanese tale is most likely to be described by the respondents as unusual and unexpected. The issue of the open or cyclic end which was discussed above seems to be of great importance again here.

The next task was to name three elements of Japanese culture which stood out in the folklore examples respondents had studied. 86 answers were given. The first category included words related to value-system and worldview: industriousness (5), worldview in general (2), kindness and honesty rewarded (2), following traditions (1), belief in happiness (1), gratitude (1), self-giving (1), curiosity (1), and restrictions (1). The second category comprises 14 answers regarding religious and folk beliefs (5), belief in the supernatural (6), belief in miracles (2) and superstitions (1). Here we can also include five answers referring to karma and the life cycle. The third category illustrates family relations, marital relations, marriage, and the attitude towards elders (15). Thirteen answers were related to social relations, the social hierarchy and the group and community relations. Eight answers described the positive attitude of Japanese people towards nature. Regarding everyday life, 8 answers mentioned agriculture and related everyday activities.

The numbers and categories above indicate that Japanese folktales can be successfully utilized to introduce Japanese culture. It is not only material culture, but also the non-material heritage which is present and visible in the folk narrative, and although some of these elements have disappeared from everyday life of the present-day Japanese, folktales do give us a tool-set that might be useful when introducing Japan. Therefore, further steps should be undertaken in this direction.

With these four surveys, the author hopes to have shown how Japanese culture is perceived in Bulgaria. Although the scope of the surveys discussed here is limited, these are the first attempts to study the reception of Japanese culture through screenings of the public opinion in Bulgaria. The author hopes that, with time, additional studies will be undertaken and the results will be used to determine the best ways to actively promote Japan and its culture in Bulgaria.

## **Conclusion**

This article outlines the process of promotion of Japanese culture in Bulgaria, its historical development, and present state of reception. Watershed points in this process include the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in the 1920s, the political and economic agreements of the 1970s, and increased efforts to publish and translate literary works from and about Japan in the 1980s and 1990s. Further, the role of national and private institutions, especially from the 1990s onwards is considered of great importance for the reception of Japanese culture in Bulgaria.

The four surveys on Bulgarian reception of Japanese culture presented here show that after decades of cultural interaction, the Bulgarian public is well-informed regarding Japan-related topics and, more importantly, has a keen interest in this country. And despite the fact that there is still much to be done in order for Japanese culture to become more visible, and although there are differences in the philosophy and thinking that are not easy to overcome, the process of the promoting Japanese culture in Bulgaria is moving forward.

After more than a hundred years of interaction between Bulgaria and Japan, one can say that cross-cultural communication between these two countries has had very positive results. Thus far, positive images of, and interest in, Japanese culture and people has been constantly nurtured. Thanks to the efforts of numerous Bulgarian and Japanese institutions and individuals, nowadays Bulgarians are actively aware of Japan and Japanese culture. This is a sure path to cross-cultural understanding and fruitful cooperation in the future. Regardless of geographic distances and cultural background, Bulgaria and Japan continue to build bridges to each other.

## References and Links

### References:

- Aarne, Antti and Stith Thompson, 1961, *Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia.
- Bosilek, Ran (Босилек, Ран), 1995 [1941], *Японски приказки [Japanese folktales]*. Sofia: Bwlgarski hudojnik.
- Dorson, Richard, 1975, “National Characteristics of Japanese Folktale,” *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 12 (Hague: Mouton and Co.): 241-256.
- Kandilarov, Evgeny (Кандиралов, Евгений), 2005a, “Поглед към българо-японските отношения след Втората световна война” [Bulgaria-Japan relations after the Second World War]. *Еволюция* 6.
- Kandilarov, Evgeny (Кандиралов, Евгений), 2005b, “Участието на България в Експо ’70: българо-японските отношения и формирането на българската икономическа политика” [Bulgaria at EXPO ’70 – Bulgaria-Japan relations and the forming of the economy policy]. *Ида* 20: 64-90.
- Kandilarov, Evgeny, (Кандиралов, Евгений), 2006, “70-те години на XX век: апогей на българо-японските отношения” [The Seventies of the 20th century – an apogee in Bulgaria-Japan relations]. *Преломни времена: 1970-1979*. 753-769.
- Kandilarov, Evgeny, (Кандиралов, Евгений), 2009, *България и Япония. От Студената война към XXI век [Bulgaria and Japan: from the Cold War towards the 21st century]*. Sofia: D. Yakov.
- Katō, Kōgi (加藤耕義), 1998, 「日本の昔話における正体露見」 [The Disclosure of true shape in Japanese folktales], 小澤俊夫編『日本昔話のイメージ』古今社, 56-90 頁.
- Kawai, Hayao (河合隼雄), 1977, 『昔話の深層』 [The roots of the folktale], 福音館書店.
- Kawai, Hayao (河合隼雄), 2002 [1982], 『昔話と日本人の心』 [The folktale and the Japanese psyche], 岩波書店.
- Luethi, Max (リュティ, マックス), 1976, 「日本の昔話にはさまざまの特徴がある」 [Various characteristics of the Japanese folktales] 小澤俊夫編『日本人と民話』ぎょうせい, 117-125 頁.
- Miller, Allan L., 1987, “The Swan-maiden Revisited: Religious Significance of the ‘Divine-wife’ Folktales with Special Reference to Japan,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 46 (Nagoya: Nanzan University): 55-86.
- Ozawa, Toshio (小澤俊夫), 1981a, “Motivanalyse zur Erzählforschung,” *Fabula* 22 (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter): 307-311.
- Ozawa, Toshio (小澤俊夫), 1981b, “Vergleichende Märchenforschung. Ehe zwischen Menschen und Tieren”. In Rolf Kloepfer, Gisela Janetzke-Dillner (Hg.), *Erzählung und Erzählforschung im 20 Jh.* Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, pp. 431-439.
- Ozawa, Toshio (小澤俊夫), 1993, “Japan”. In Kurt Ranke (Hg.), *Enzyklopädie des*

- Märchens* Bd.7 (Berlin: de Gruyter): 480-496.
- Ozawa, Toshio (小澤俊夫), 1994, 『昔話のコスモロジー人と動物との婚姻譚』 [*The cosmology of the folktale: The marriage between a human being and an animal*] 講談社.
- Ozawa, Toshio (小澤俊夫), 1996, “Die Naturanschauung in japanischen Maerchen”. In Leander Petzold (Hg.), *Folk Narrative and World View*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, pp. 631-638.
- Petkova, Gergana (Петкова, Гергана), 2005, “Върху достоверността на превода” [On the authenticity of the translation: Japanese folktales in focus]. In *Proceedings of the IInd National Symposium on Japanese Language Studies and Methodology of Japanese Language Teaching*. Sofia: Softtrade, pp. 90-102.
- Petkova, Gergana (Петкова, Гергана), 2008, “Японската приказна традиция и особености на японската вълшебна приказка” [The Japanese folktale tradition and the characteristics of the Japanese fairy tale]. In Godishnik FKNF. Sofia: Sofia University Press, pp. 209-230.
- Petkova, Gergana (Петкова, Гергана), 2009a, *Смехът на Они и други японски приказки* [*Oni's laugh and other Japanese fairy tales*]. Sofia: Zvezdi.
- Petkova, Gergana (Петкова, Гергана), 2009b, “Propp and the Japanese Folklore: Applying Morphological Parsing to Answer Questions Concerning the Specifics of the Japanese Fairy Tale”. In *Asiatische Studien* LXIII (3). Bern: Peter Lang, pp. 597-618.
- Petkova, Gergana (Петкова, Гергана), 2010a, *Етнография на Япония* [*Ethnography of Japan – eight introductory themes*]. София: Звезди.
- Petkova, Gergana (Петкова, Гергана), 2010b, “Ibunka Communication: The Reception of the Japanese Folktales in Bulgaria: A Case-study of the Tale ‘The Crane-wife’”. In *Proceedings of the International Conference Issues of Far Eastern Literatures*. St. Petersburg: SPU, pp. 233-244.
- Petrova, Gergana (Петрова, Гергана)(See also Petkova, Gergana), 2002, “Sad Beauty or Beautiful Sadness: Beauty, Love and Marriage as Reflected in Japanese Fairy Tales”. In *Hōkokusho*. Kōbe: Kōbe Jogakuin Bigaku Kenkyūkai.
- Petrova, Gergana (Петрова, Гергана)(See also Petkova, Gergana), 2004, *Male Characters in the Japanese Fairy Tale: Classification and Analysis*. PhD thesis. University of Zurich. [www.dissertationen.unizh.ch/index2004.html](http://www.dissertationen.unizh.ch/index2004.html)
- Propp, Vladimir (Проп, Владимир), 2001 [1969], *Морфология на приказката* (*Morphology of the folktale*). Sofia: “Z. Stoyanov” Publ.
- Roehrich, Lutz, 1956, *Märchen und Wirklichkeit: Eine volkscundliche Untersuchung*. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner.
- Roehrich, Lutz (レーリヒ, ルッツ), 1976, 「ドイツ人の目から見た日本の昔話」 [*The Japanese folktales as seen by a German*] 小澤俊夫編『日本人と民話』ぎょうせい, 96-105 頁.

- Schenda, Rudolf (シェンダ, ルードルフ), 1976, 「日本の昔話の中で日本的なものとは何か」 [What is Japanese in the Japanese folktales?] 小澤俊夫編 『日本人と民話』 ぎょうせい, 106-116 頁.
- Seki, Keigo (関敬吾), 1950-1958, 『日本昔話集成』 [*Index of Japanese folktales*] 全6巻, 角川書店.
- Seki, Keigo (関敬吾), 1980, 「昔話の社会性」 [Social features of folktales] 『関敬吾著作集1』 同朋舎出版.
- Trendafilova, Nadya (Трендафилова, Надя), 2009 [1974], *Японски приказки* [Japanese folktales]. Sofia: JAR.
- Tsigova, Boyka (Цигова, Бойка), 1988, *Дзен естетиката и японската художествена традиция* [*Zen aesthetics and the Japanese art tradition*]. Sofia: Nauka i Izkustvo.
- Tsigova, Boyka (ボイガ, ツイゴヴァ), 2004, 「異文化の側面：ブルガリアの日本文化観—その理解と日本文芸作品の翻訳をめぐって」 [Cultural issues: The perception of Japanese culture in Bulgaria: On the translation and reception of literature], *Bulletin of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies* 28: 377-390.
- Tsigova, Boyka (Цигова, Бойка), 2005, “За превода на японска поезия в България” [On the translation of Japanese poetry in Bulgaria], *Panorama* (Sofia: Panorama): 145-153.
- Tsigova, Boyka (Цигова, Бойка), 2006, *Пътят на словото в Япония: За изреченото и написаното през вековете* [*The word-road in Japan: on the written and communicated during the centuries*]. Sofia: Sofia University Press.

### Links on the Internet:

- Bonsai Club Bulgaria: [bonsai.bg](http://bonsai.bg)
- Bulgarian Karate-do Federation: [www.karatebg.com](http://www.karatebg.com)
- Bulgarian Kendo Federation: [kendo.bg](http://kendo.bg)
- Centre Ikuo Hirayama: [cih-sofia.blogspot.com](http://cih-sofia.blogspot.com)
- Chado Urasenke Bulgaria: [www.urasenke-bulgaria.net](http://www.urasenke-bulgaria.net)
- Embassy of Japan in Bulgaria: [www.bg.emb-japan.go.jp](http://www.bg.emb-japan.go.jp)
- Fukuyama-Bulgaria Association: [www.fba.rgr.jp](http://www.fba.rgr.jp)
- Ikebana Club Soga: [www.ikebana-bg.com](http://www.ikebana-bg.com)
- Japan-Bulgaria Society: [www.bul.jp](http://www.bul.jp)
- Japanese Club “Sofia Nihonjin-kai”: [www.geobiz.com/jpclub](http://www.geobiz.com/jpclub)
- JICA Alumni Bulgaria: [www.jicabg.org](http://www.jicabg.org)
- Monbusho Alumni Bulgaria: [www.monbusho-bg.jp](http://www.monbusho-bg.jp)
- National Kyokushinkai Federation: [www.kyokushin-bulgaria.com](http://www.kyokushin-bulgaria.com)
- Sofia University “St Kliment Ohridski”: [www.uni-sofia.bg](http://www.uni-sofia.bg)
- Takemusu Aikido Bulgaria: [aikido.bg](http://aikido.bg)



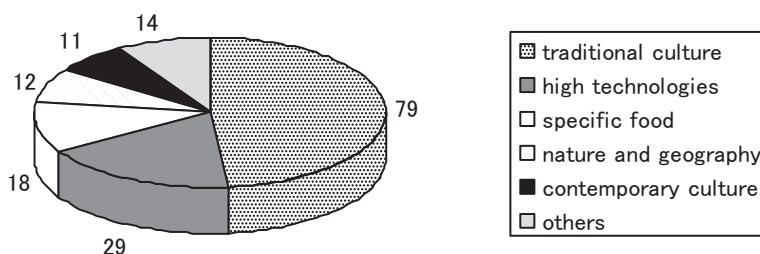
## Appendix 1

### The Image of Japan in Bulgaria

*Questionnaire conducted in May 2010 among 145 participants of various ages, genders, and professional and educational backgrounds*

#### 1. What is the first thing you associate with Japan?

1. Traditional culture – 79
2. High technologies – 29
3. Specific food – 18
4. Nature and geography – 12
5. Contemporary culture – 11
6. Others – 14



#### 2. Have you ever read a Japanese book or a book on Japan?

Yes – 64      No – 81

1. James Clavel, *Shogun* – 21
2. Marko Semov, *Japan as It Is* (За Япония като за Япония) – 14
3. Arthur Golden, *Memoirs of a Geisha* – 9

#### 3. Which of the following elements of Japanese traditional culture are still alive today?

1. *Origami* (paper folding) – 137
2. *Ikebana* (flower arrangement) – 129
3. Tea ceremony (*chado*) – 118
4. *Yakuza* (underground gang) – 74
5. *Geisha* (geisha girl) – 69

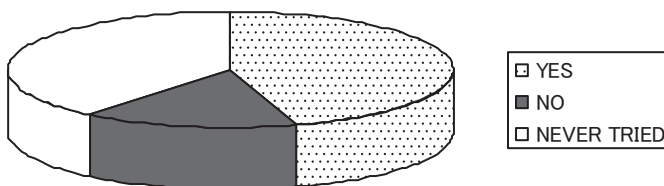
- *Ninja (ninja spy)* – 9
- *Shogun (shogun warlord)* – 8
- *Samurai (samurai warrior)* – 7

#### 4. Do you watch Japanese movies, drama or anime?

Yes – 96                      No – 61

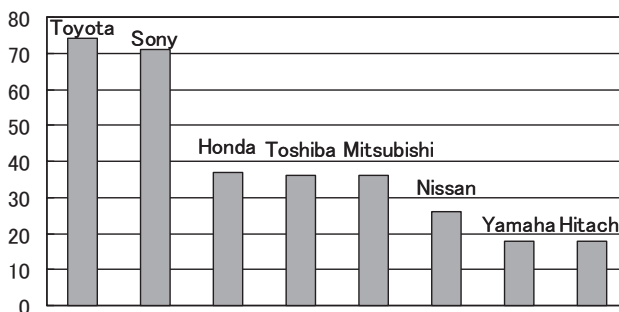
#### 5. Do you like Japanese food?

Yes – 66                      No – 23                      Never tried – 57



#### 6. Please list a few Japanese companies you know.

1. Toyota – 74
2. Sony – 71
3. Honda – 37
4. Toshiba – 36
5. Mitsubishi – 36
6. Nissan – 26
7. Yamaha – 18
8. Hitachi – 18
- By mistake – 4



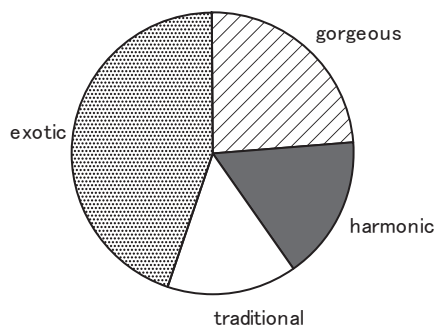
#### 7. What makes Bulgaria known in Japan?

1. Yoghurt – 128
2. Sumo-wrestler (Koto-ōshū) – 102
3. Rose-Festival – 44
4. Baba Marta (1st of March Spring festival) – 15
5. Vladimir Dimitrov – the Master (famous Bulgarian painter of the first half of the 20th century) – 12

Other (free answer) – Rhythmic gymnastics (7); Bulgarian folklore (6); The choir of the Bulgarian National Radio (4); National Opera (1); wine (1); the soccer player Hristo Stoichkov (1)

### 8. Which adjective would you use to describe Japan (free answer)?

1. Exotic – 49
2. Gorgeous, Splendid – 26
3. Harmonious – 18
4. Traditional – 16



### 9. Which word would you use to describe the Japanese people (free answer)?

1. Disciplined – 60
2. Dutiful – 33
3. Hardworking – 30
4. Polite – 22

### 10. Would you like to visit Japan? For what purpose?

Yes – 138      No – 7

1. Trip, tourism – 127
2. Study – 11
3. Business – 6
4. Other – 7

## Appendix 2

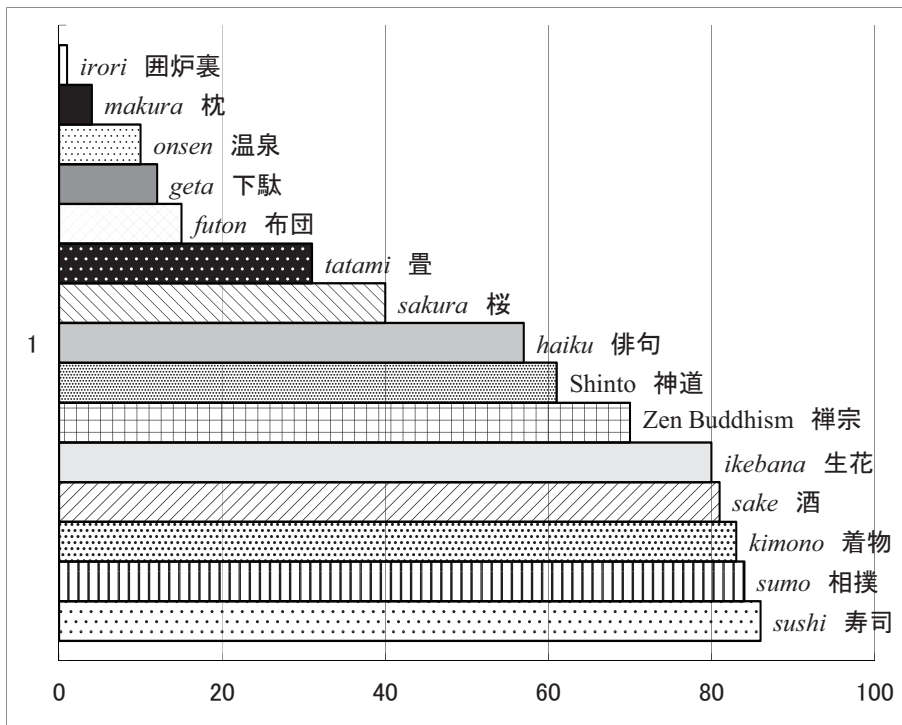
### Are you familiar with the Japanese traditional culture and way of life?

*A survey conducted October-November 2010 among 87 participants of various ages, genders, and professional and educational backgrounds*

#### Part 1

Do you know what\*\* is / have you ever heard of:

*Sushi 86 ; Sumo 84 ; Kimono 83 ; Sake 81 ; Ikebana 80 ; Zen 70 ; Shinto 61 ; Haiku 57 ; Sakura 40 ; Tatami 31 ; Futon 15 ; Geta 12 ; Onsen 10 ; Makura 4 ; Irori 1*



## **Part 2**

What is typical for Japan and Japanese people:

1. rice (86) or wheat (1)
2. leather (3) or wooden footwear (83)
3. straw (63) or stone roofs (22)
4. raw (84) or fried fish (3)
5. forks (1) or chopsticks (86)
6. green (74) or black tea (13)
7. hearth (52) or floor heating (34)
8. brick (15) or paper walls (71)
9. the man (49) or the woman (38) keeps the family budget
10. the individual (17) or the group (69)
11. celebrating Christmas (2) or New Year (76)
12. the father (72) or the mother (14) is the center of the family table
13. the daughter (5) or the son (81) inherit the father
14. sit on chairs (1) or on the floor when eating (85)
15. in art main focus of the picture is the human being (4) or the nature (82)