

# Japanese Studies at the University of Bucharest: Focusing on the Center for Japanese Studies

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## Introduction

With an increasing number of young people learning Japanese and being deeply interested in Japanese culture, Romania has, in recent years, come to be seen as one of most promising of the Eastern European countries in terms of the future expansion of Japanese studies and relations with Japan. The official website of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also picked up on this:

“Japanese culture is widely regarded with much interest in Romania, and thus it is often the case that Japanese cultural events are highly appreciated and esteemed. The Japanese language is also getting more and more popular, and currently over 2,000 pupils and students are studying Japanese.”<sup>2</sup>

The strong development of Japanese language education and Japanese studies in Romania after 2000 took place in the context of this growing interest in Japan among young people.

In this paper I will report on the current situation of Japanese studies in Romania, focusing on the Center for Japanese Studies at the University of Bucharest, considered a core institution for Japanese studies in Romania and in Central and Eastern Europe.

## Japanese Studies at the University of Bucharest

The University of Bucharest is one of the oldest higher education institutions in Romania and has a leading role in the fields of education and research in the country. The Japanese Language and Literature Department of the University of Bucharest was founded in

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/romania/index.html>.

1975 and became the leader in the field of Japanese language education and Japanese studies in Romania. In 2005 the University of Bucharest established a Master's program in East Asian Studies with great emphasis on Japan, and in 2010 it opened the Center for Japanese Studies. At the same time, under the umbrella of the Doctoral School of Cultural Studies of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literature, more and more outstanding students began to conduct Ph.D. research on topics related to Japan.

In the following sections, I will briefly describe the undergraduate and graduate programs/courses in the field of Japanese studies, before concentrating on the Center for Japanese Studies, the highest institution for the development of Japanese studies in Romania.

#### (1) The Japanese Language and Literature Department

Founded in 1975, the Japanese Language and Literature Department has benefited continuously since 1978 from the presence of a Japanese language specialist dispatched by the Japan Foundation. The Japanese Language and Literature Department has the longest tradition in Romania and has always played a leading role in the fields of Japanese studies and Japanese language teaching in Romania.

The Japanese Language and Literature Department is one of the most popular departments of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures at the University of Bucharest and has seen, over the past five to six years, a dramatic increase in the number of students. There are now as many as 60 freshmen every year, with a total of about 180 students.

The curriculum of the program includes, besides Japanese language courses, courses on Japanese civilization and history, Japanese literature, Japanese society, Japanese linguistics and, more recently, Japanese contemporary culture.

The staff comprises five permanent Romanian teachers, one part-time collaborator and one (recently two) Japanese language teachers dispatched by the Japan Foundation. All the staff of the Japanese Department have conducted research in the field of Japanese studies in Japan. The main topics of research of the staff include "the image of the other in Meiji Japan," "modern ideas in Edo Japan," "Japanese proverbs and Japanese culture," "Japanese youth culture," and "the phonetic and phonologic structure of the Japanese language."

Over the past ten years, the Japanese Language and Literature Department has succeeded in initiating and carrying out a series of activities and programs with the purpose of facilitating and encouraging the development of Japanese studies in Romania. One of the major achievements is the development of a permanent and solid intellectual exchange with universities and scholars in Japan and Europe. At the present, the

University of Bucharest has student exchange programs and intellectual exchanges in the field of Japanese studies with a large number of universities in Europe and Japan (INALCO, Trier University, and Ghent University in Europe, and Waseda University, Meiji University, Ochanomizu University, Gakushūin Women's College, Fukushima University, Osaka University, Nara University of Education, Akita University, Akita International University, and Kagoshima University in Japan).

Under the university exchange agreements, about ten students and two graduate students head to Japan every year to study, and about three students go to study at European universities. Also, professors from Japanese and Western European universities come every year to give lectures at the University of Bucharest.

The Department also encourages diversification of extracurricular activities to enable students to have contact with different aspects of Japanese culture. Different workshops have been organized and gradually a system of Japanese culture clubs has been established. Starting in 2010, students have organized in April or May a Japanese culture festival called *Michi-biraki*.

Another achievement of the Department is the diversification and enrichment of the Japanese studies and Japanese language library. The Japanese Language and Literature Department has the biggest and richest library related to Japanese studies in Romania due to many donations by the Japan Foundation. A large number of reference books in a wide variety of fields such as Japanese literature, history, linguistics, social studies, economy and politics, and popular culture are available. The Department also has a multi-functional laboratory with new modern equipment donated by the Japanese Government in 2007 through a Cultural Grassroots Grant.

The staff members are involved in publication projects and international projects and have given presentations in national and international conferences on Japanese studies (in Japan, France, Poland, Hungary, Ukraine, etc.). Most of them are members of EAJS (European Association of Japanese Studies) and other academic organizations in the field of Japanese studies. Three of the members regularly translate Japanese literature into Romanian.

## (2) Japanese Studies at the Graduate Level: The Master's Program in East Asian Studies and the Doctoral School of Cultural Studies

The increase in the number of qualified staff and the strengthening of international collaborations has opened up new possibilities. In 2005, the Departments of Chinese Language and Literature, Japanese Language and Literature, and Korean Language and Literature worked together to establish the first and only Master's program in East Asian

Studies in Romania. This program focuses on cultural studies and translation studies. Around 25 candidates join the program each year, and more than 15 are former students of the Japanese Language and Literature Department.

The curriculum includes courses on modern East Asian history and society, the intellectual history of East Asia, the history of Oriental studies, anthropology, cultural concepts of East Asia and their translation in the West, the history of writing in East Asia, and linguistic typology of East Asian languages. The teaching staff consists of a team of professors belonging to the Chinese, Japanese and Korean Departments. Also, lectures given by foreign speakers are scheduled every semester.

The most outstanding Master's students enter the Doctoral School of Cultural Studies. Although this Doctoral School is not focused exclusively on Japanese studies or East Asia, doctoral candidates can work on subjects related to Japan from a comparative perspective. This is a three year program. The courses in the field of Japanese studies at the graduate level are quite new and projects to develop them are in progress.

## The Center for Japanese Studies

The establishment of the Center for Japanese Studies came about as a continuation of these developments and as a response to the increasing interest in Japanese studies and Japanese culture in general among young people in Romania, as well as to the emergence of young scholars who conducted research in Japan and demonstrated a strong will to engage in long-lasting research activities.

Being the first institution of this kind in Romania, the inauguration of the Center for Japanese Studies attracted much media attention:

“The Bucharest University will open on Wednesday, August 25, the Center for Japanese Studies, the first such center in Romania, aiming to promote and support the research activity in Japanese studies. The project benefits from the support from the Japanese Government (...). The Center will provide the tools for research projects on Japan and training for researchers in Japanese studies.”<sup>3</sup>

The opening ceremony held on 25 August 2010 was attended by many officials, among whom were Prof. Ioan Panzaru (Rector of the University of Bucharest), H. E. Mr. Natsuo Amemiya (the Japanese Ambassador to Romania) and Mr. Yoshiyuki Nishizawa (counselor, Japan Foundation).

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3 <http://www.romania-insider.com/bucharest-university-opens-center-of-japanese-studies/8526>.

### (1) Objective and Structure

The Center's main objective is to conduct, promote, and support research in the field of Japanese studies in Romania and to encourage international collaboration in this field, creating the most suitable environment for the training of young researchers. The initiative of establishing the Center was taken by a group of Japanese studies researchers at the University and was generously encouraged and supported by H. E. Mr. Natsuo Amemiya, the Japanese Ambassador to Romania.

The board of the Center for Japanese Studies consists of Associate Professor Anca Focșeneanu (Director), lecturer Ruxandra Raianu (Deputy Director) and lecturer Roman Pașca (secretary). The Center draws together scholars and researchers whose academic interest is focused on Japan, creating conditions for interdisciplinary research in Japanese studies. Most of the members of the Center are at the same time teaching staff or Ph.D. candidates in the Japanese Language and Literature Department of the University or other universities that offer Japanese language programs. Some members belong to universities in Japan.

### (2) Activities, Achievement and Future Projects

In its more than two years of existence, the Center has succeeded in conducting a series of projects and activities that already have had a very strong impact on the development of Japanese studies. Beginning in November 2010, the Center launched a series of lectures on different topics that ranged from Japanese diplomacy and economics to Noh theatre and ikebana.

The first lecture was held by H. E. Mr. Natsuo Amemiya, the Japanese Ambassador to Romania and was entitled "Japan-Romania Bilateral Relations: Focusing on the Economy and Economic Cooperation Fields." Other lectures included "The Japanese Spirit of 'Manufacture' and 'National Foundation': What can be Learned from 'TPS' (Toyota Production System, 1960–) and the Iwakura Mission (1871–1873)" given by Professor Shinji Naruo; "After Mishima: About Death and Theatre in Japan" given by Professor Stanca Scholz-Cionca (Trier University); "The Construction of National Language and National State in a Comparative Perspective: Japan and South Slavic Linguistic Continuum" given by Professor Andrej Bekes (Tsukuba University/Ljubljana University) and "*Gosekku* and Ikebana" given by the ikebana master Tenkei Nomura.

One of the most important events organized by the Center is the annual International symposium on Japanese studies supported by the Japan Foundation. The first international symposium was organized in 2011 on the topic "Linguistic and Cultural Identity in Japan" and had as main keynote speaker the famous Japanese theatre director Hirata Oriza. The symposium enjoyed the presence of nine foreign researchers and a large

audience. The second international symposium was organized in 2012 on the topic “Self and Other in Japan: Mutual Representations” and had as a keynote speaker Professor Kazuhiko Komatsu, Director-General of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken). This symposium was a great success and the number of foreign participants increased to 26, representing 11 countries (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Japan, Serbia, Slovenia, Slovakia, Turkey, Ukraine and the U.S.A). The publication of the proceedings of the symposia together with a publication program of Japanese culture volumes and translations from Japanese literature is another priority of the Center in the near future.

Another important project of the Center is the organization of a modern library for Japanese studies. In order to promote the library, in September 2011 the Center organized an Exhibition of Japanese Studies Books. Also, in the library room there are frequent Japanese movie screenings. The Center is also actively disseminating information about Japanese studies. For this purpose, the Center created a website (<http://csj.cc.unibuc.ro/>) that announces important events organized by the Center, as well as different information about programs in Japanese studies for young researchers, summer schools, scholarships, symposia on Japanese studies in Europe and Japan, and the publication of important materials in the field of Japanese studies and so on.

Members of the Center are encouraged to participate actively in international symposia and conferences on Japanese studies. The most recent participation was in February 2012 when Associate Professor Anca Focșeneanu participated as a senior researcher in the “Ph.D. Workshop in Japanese Studies, East and Central Europe 2012” organized by the Japan Foundation, Budapest (JFBP). As for future projects, the Center for Japanese Studies intends to focus over the next five years on the development of an international research network and collaboration and the consolidation of Japanese studies at a graduate level in order to form and produce young Japanese studies researchers.

## Concluding Remarks

Even if Romania is still a newcomer to the community of Japanese studies in Europe and the world, we feel that now, when more and more young people are discovering an interest in Japan, it is the right moment to put Romania on the map of Japanese studies in Europe and assume the role of a bridge between Western and Eastern Europe, and even further, between Europe and Japan, in the field of Japanese studies.

## Selected Bibliography and Electronic Sources

Focșeneanu Anca. "Rumania (The University of Bucharest)" in *The 10th International Conference of the EAJIS, Japanese Studies in Central and Eastern Europe, Special Session*, Department of Japanese and Korean Studies, Warsaw University, 2003.

<http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/europe/romania/index.html>

<http://www.romania-insider.com/bucharest-university-opens-center-of-japanese-studies/8526>

## Appendices

### University of Bucharest: Japanese Language and Literature Department

#### A: Basic Information

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Name of the institution which offers Japanese Studies courses       | University of Bucharest  |
| Faculty/Department  | Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures: Japanese Language and Literature Department  |
| Address   | Str. Pitar Mos 7-13, et II, Bucharest, Romania   |
| Contacts  | Name: Anca FOCȘENEANU  |
|   | Position: Associate Professor, Head  |
|   | Phone number: +40722-699243  |
|   | Email: sectiajaponeza@gmail.com  |
|   | <a href="http://japoneza.ils.unibuc.ro">http://japoneza.ils.unibuc.ro</a>  |
| The year Japanese Studies program started                           | 1975   |
| Kind of Japanese Studies program                                    | Bachelor's program, Master's program, Doctoral program   |
| The number of Japanese Studies specialists/teaching staffs          | Full-time 7 (Native 2)<br>Part-time 2 (Native 0)   |
| Japanese Studies students number (by grade, year, or level)         | First year: 55, Second year: 55, Third year: 50<br>Master's program: 25, Doctoral program: 3   |
| Title received when finishing the program                           | Bachelor Degree in Japanese Studies<br>Master's Degree in East Asian Studies<br>Ph.D. in Cultural Studies  |
| The average number of the students doing research in Japan per year | 12   |
| Joint research partner institutions                                 | In Japan: Akita University, Akita International University, Fukushima University, Gakushūin Women's College, Kagoshima University, Meiji University, Nara University for Education, Ochanomizu University, Osaka University, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Waseda University<br>In Europe: INALCO, Ghent University, Trier University |

## B: Romanian Specialists/Teaching Staffs

| Name               | Research field (s)   | Ph.D. thesis title (if the degree is awarded)   | Courses and levels (B, M, D, O)*  |
|--------------------|--|---|---|
| AVRAM A. Andrei    | English and Japanese Linguistics: Phonetics and Phonology                    | On the Syllable Structure of English Pidgins and Creoles                                  | Japanese Linguistics (B)<br>Linguistic Typology (M)                           |
| FOCȘENEANU Anca    | Japanese Linguistics (syntax), Language and Culture, Japanese Modern Culture | Japanese Onomatopoeia: A Typological Approach   | Japanese Linguistics (B)<br>Japanese Civilization (B)<br>Japanese Society (M) |
| RAIANU Ruxandra    | Japanese Linguistics   | Gradația în limba japoneză în perspectivă tipologică                                      | Japanese Linguistics (B)<br>Japanese Business Communication (M)               |
| GHEORGHE Alexandra | Japanese Literature, Japanese History and Civilization                       | Japonia și lumea Occidentală: imaginea celui alt între 1853–1912                          | Japanese Literature (B)<br>Japanese Civilization (B)                          |
| PAȘCA Roman        | Japanese Literature and Civilization, Japanese Pop Culture                   | Instances of Modernity in the Eighteenth Century: A Comparative View of Japan and Britain | Japanese Literature (B)<br>Japanese Popular Culture (M)                       |
| FLOREA Flavius     | Classical Japanese, Japanese Literature                                      | Traducerea ca Interpretare. Kawabata în franceză  | Japanese Literature (B)   |
| MAXIM Steluța      | Modern Japanese Literature   |   | Librarian   |

\* B = Bachelor, M = Master, D= Doctoral, O = Other

## C: Japanese Studies Courses

| Name of the course  | Year (I, II, III, other) | The number of classes/week | Period (semester/etc.) |
|---|--------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| Japanese Civilization and History                             | I                        | 2                          | One year               |
| Japanese Literature and Culture                               | II, III                  | 2                          | Two years              |
| Japanese Linguistics  | I, II, III               | 2                          | Three years            |
| Japanese Society  | III                      | 2                          | One semester           |
| Intercultural Communication                                   | III                      | 2                          | One semester           |
| Japanese Popular Culture                                      | Master's program         | 2                          | One semester           |
| Japanese Business Communication                               | Master's program         | 2                          | Two semesters          |
| Japanese Intellectual History                                 | Master's program         | 2                          | One semester           |
| Japanese Religions  | Master's program         | 2                          | One semester           |
| Comparative Linguistics                                       | Master's program         | 2                          | One semester           |
| Japanese Arts: Calligraphy, Sumi-e, Origami, Movie Screenings | I, II, III               | On a irregular basis       |                        |



D: Japanese Studies Library

| Field                             | Number of books | Number of periodicals | Language: Japanese/Other |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Japanese literature               | 1500            | 1                     | Japanese 1400            |
| Japanese literary criticism       | 200             | —                     | Japanese 150             |
| Japanese history                  | 50              | —                     | Japanese 30              |
| Japanese culture and civilization | 80              | 1                     | Japanese 60              |
| Japanese arts                     | 50              | —                     | Japanese 35              |
| Japanese business and economy     | 30              | —                     | Japanese 20              |
| Japanese politics                 | 30              | —                     | Japanese 20              |
| Japanese linguistics              | 100             | —                     | Japanese 60              |
| Dictionaries                      | 200             | —                     | Does not apply           |

University of Bucharest: Center for Japanese Studies

A: Basic Information

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Name of the institution    | University of Bucharest  |
| Faculty/Department         | Center for Japanese Studies  |
| Address                    | Bdv. Schitu Magureanu, no. 1.  |
| Director: contact          | Name: Anca FOCȘENEANU<br>Position: Director<br>Phone number: +40722-699243<br>Email: csj.unibuc@gmail.com<br><a href="http://csj.cc.unibuc.ro">http://csj.cc.unibuc.ro</a>   |
| The year of establishment  | Establishment of the Center: 25 August 2010  |
| Kind of Japanese studies   | Research Institute   |
| Members                    | Number of the founding members of the center: 12   |
| Partner institutions       | In Japan: Waseda University, Meiji University, Ochanomizu University, Tohoku University, National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka (Minpaku), Nara University for Education<br>In Europe: CEEJA (France), Ghent University, Trier University |
| Current fields of research | Japanese Modern Literature, Japanese History, Japanese Art, Japanese Pre-modern Thinking, Japanese Linguistics, Japanese Popular Culture, Gender Studies, etc.   |

B. Main Activities in the Period 2010–2011

| Type and title of Symposium/<br>Workshop/ Lecture/Conference/<br>Projects  | Date of events | International/<br>National | Guest speakers   |
|--|----------------|----------------------------|--|
| Inauguration of the Center for Japanese Studies  | August 2010    | International              | Ioan Pânzaru (Rector of the University of Bucharest), Natsuo Amemiya (Japanese Ambassador to Romania), Yoshiyuki Nishizawa, (Counselor, Japan Foundation), Hideki Kato (President, Tokyo Foundation) |
| Conference “Japan-Romania Bilateral Relations: Focusing on the Economic Cooperation Fields”  | November 2010  | International              | Natsuo Amemiya, Japanese Ambassador  |
| Debate “Japanese Studies in Romania: Perspectives and Challenges”  | November 2010  | National                   | The members of the Center  |
| Conference “The Japanese Spirit of Manufacture and National Foundation”  | January 2011   | International              | Naruo Shinji, Professor  |
| Conference “Păsările la taifas: Andō Shōeki și critica sistemelor culturale în Japonia secolului al XVIII-lea”                             | February 2011  | National                   | Roman Pasca, lecturer, Japanese Department, University of Bucharest  |
| Debate “Japanese Studies in Europe: Toward a Researcher’s Network”   | 4 March 2011   | International              | Hartmut O. Rotermond (France), Mitsuhiro Shinmen (National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka)   |
| International symposium on Japanese Studies “Linguistic and Cultural Identity in Japan”  | March 2011     | International              | Hirata Oriza (Osaka University), Hartmut O. Rotermond (France), Mitsuhiro Shinmen (National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka)  |
| Lecture “After Mishima: About Death and Theater in Japan”  | April 2011     | International              | Stanca Scholz-Cionca, Professor, Trier University  |
| Exhibition “Japan through Books and Postcards”   | September 2011 | National                   |  |
| Movie screening “Tokyo Sonata”   | November 2011  | National                   |  |
| Lecture “The Construction of National Language and National State in Comparative Perspective: Japan and South Slavic Linguistic Continuum” | November 2011  | International              | Andrej Bekes, professor, Tsukuba University/Ljubljana University   |
| Movie screening “Kikujirō no natsu”  | December 2011  | National                   |  |