

A History of Japanese Studies in Spain

---- An introduction ----¹

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Abstract

A brief overview is offered of the whole history of studies related to Japan in Spain. It is a long history, but intermittent. The missionary period presents a very good start full of possibilities but thwarted all too soon. A second period opens during the *sakoku* in Japan, where missionary-grounded texts are still produced. Then Japanism comes in from Europe, making a solid ground in Spain too. The first Spanish generation of Japanologists is quite late compared with Britain, and centers around the 50's - 90's of last century. Japanese Studies properly speaking are still in the initial stage in Spain at this very moment. University curricula are proof thereof.

Preliminary consideration. A note on the disciplinary approach

When we generally discuss about the notion of “Japanese Studies” today, we proceed from a preliminary agreement concerning the scope of the field we grasp by this denomination, the historical moment of the foundation of the discipline as such and the general features of its history. Moreover so if we speak about Japanese Studies in Europe. Broadly speaking we consider the foundation of the field to have happened around the moment when European scholars entered Meiji Japan, thanks to the Japanese government’s policy of fostering cultural exchanges with our countries. We call this phase the era of ‘Japanologists’, the self-learned almost heroic founding fathers of the discipline, revealing by using this term our dependency on the German tradition of *Japanology*, soon to become an academically grounded field of research. We basically agree that after WWII the situation of the discipline radically changed, and the already running academic programs yielded new generations of scholars who succeeded the former pioneers, entering a wholly new phase of mature research. This new phase we call properly speaking the constitution of Japanese Studies as such. Japanese Studies would align together with Chinese Studies or Korean Studies to shape a broader field under the general heading of Area Studies, itself a development from Cultural Anthropology, but provided with a wider, multidisciplinary scope.

But when we turn to the subject of Japanese Studies in European countries like Spain or Portugal, we are in great trouble to recognise the general features described above. In a word, the history of Japanese Studies in these countries only shares a partial ground with the rest of European

¹ The precedents of this essay can be found in Solano/Rodao/Togores (eds. 1988) *El Extremo Oriente ibérico. Investigaciones históricas: Metodología y estado de la cuestión*, CSIC 1989. Fl. Rodao (1992) “Los estudios sobre Japón en España y Portugal: Una aproximación” *Revista Española del Pacífico* no. 1, vol. 1, 167-172. E. Barlés (2003) “Luces y sombras en la historiografía del arte japonés en España” *Artigrama* no. 18, 23-82.

countries, and must be considered on its own as a marginal but relevant contributor to the general field. Something similar happens on the far eastern side of the continent, with countries like the Russian Federation, with a totally original history of academic and cultural relations with Japan. Generally speaking, we must admit that the Iberian contribution to the field of Japanese Studies has a very special pre-history, so important in relation to the whole picture, that should it not exist, we would be impelled to conclude this report rightaway by noting the fact that these studies started recently and that there is a long way ahead.

The relevance of the close contacts between Spain, Portugal and Japan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries makes us shift our focus from the modern period to pre-modern Japan and the Europe of the Renaissance. For the amount of documentation produced during the so called “Iberian century” in Japan, is such and of such a historical importance that it makes the modern period of Japanese Studies in Spain and Portugal irrelevant comparatively speaking. In fact, the documentation just referred to being missionary to a great extent, the field of research called Missionary Studies stands on its own in these countries, having a long disciplinary history reaching us today, and independent from the constitution of Area Studies outlined above. The ‘Japanese’ part of these Missionary Studies integrates with the Chinese and Indian part belonging to the Oriental Provinces. The problem of to what extent and how can these Missionary Studies contribute to the field of Japanese Studies remains open, for the former are carried out by members of the religious orders concerned. Then we should make a basic distinction between Missionary Studies and Historical Research on the Missionary Period of Portugal and Spain.

As a matter of fact we have both kinds of research traditions. The Jesuits, Dominicans and other orders have a consistent modern history of editing and publishing the sources from their own archives, together with missionary histories and biographies of their martyrs and saints in Japan. To these we should add some lesser contributions in the field of theological and religious discussion concerning their Japanese experience. On the other hand, scholars in the field of Spanish History have studied the documents pertaining to the period of the Oceanic Expansion, and among them some have analysed the documents related with Japan. But still this kind of research cannot be labelled under “Japanese Studies” properly speaking. The main reason is that these historians do not learn the Japanese language and are unable to confront the Spanish documentation with other Japanese sources. Their concern is not Japanese history, but Spanish. Thirdly, there is still a thin but important tradition of Spanish scholars contributing to the field of Japanese Studies *strictu sensu*, and with relevant research on the Japanese Iberian century. In all we can perceive the disciplinary complexity of dealing with the documentation of the missionary period in the history of Japanese Studies in Spain, and the same can be said about Portugal.

The missionary period. The Iberian century in Japan

The encounter between Spain and Japan in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries raises several problems when considered from the point of view of the history of Japanese Studies. Let us point out to some of them:

Firstly, it is meaningless to talk about the Spanish contribution to the field, independently from the Portuguese share of the experience. As long as we discuss about the Macao-based historical contacts, since the Treaty of Tordesillas up to the annexation of Portugal to the Spanish crown (1580), Portugal had the lead, but the Portuguese *naos* carried to Japan Spanish, as well as Portuguese and Italian *padres* and *irmaos*, all belonging to a transnational company called the Jesuits. These were the real ambassadors, commercially, culturally and spiritually speaking. And they worked for the Company as well as for the Crown. The situation changed somehow when the Spanish settlement in Manila took the initiative. Other orders entered the field to become competitors to the Jesuit monopoly, and among them the strongest one, the Dominicans produced their documents in Spanish language for the first time, adding to the existing documents in Portuguese and in the language of culture, Latin. In all, when we talk about this period it is impossible to draw a sharp distinction between the Spanish and the Portuguese contribution to Japanese Studies, hence the term 'Iberian' being most adequate for the period.

Secondly, the encounter between the Jesuits and the Japanese was of a radically different sort from the project of evangelization of the West Indies. True, the aim of the Company was to evangelize pagan peoples, but in the case of the American natives, whether they were 'people' in the same sense as the Europeans or the Asians had to be ascertained in the first place, and a harsh discussion ensued in missionary, intellectual and governmental circles. The Christian medieval notion of man was contested by the new 'humanism', the mark of identity of the Renaissance. And here arose the first foundation of the future science of Anthropology, from the moment a distinction had to be made between 'primitive' peoples and 'civilized' ones. The former were compared to children who needed to be taught everything, not only religion. The European civilization, model for the rest of the world, bore the historical destiny of becoming the tutelary hand of God. But why were Europeans unable to recognise the highly evolved cultures of Central America? One of the clues to understand the missionary difference of approach between the West and the East Indies is the fact that there were no previous reports on the former, they were undocumented peoples. Not so with the latter, including Japan, about whom there were references in Europe since medieval times. Mostly legendary accounts, but after all pagan peoples belonging to the realm of the known world. They had language, and civilization. Francisco de Xavier compiled all available information in Macao before carrying out the trip to Japan. He wore a substantial mental image to contrast later with what he did find out. He knew he was not aiming towards an 'out of civilization' territory. He carried with him, perhaps somewhat unconsciously, an agenda for religious and cultural comparison.

Thirdly, a global approach to the Iberian century and its signification in the history of Japanese Studies, cannot be made solely from the isolated points of view of missionary history or

religious history. Not even from political history as such. The momentum of the events produced in this period affects deeply our present notion of global cultural history. Recently, scholars from different fields and even leading intellectuals are calling attention to the real meaning of the Iberian century in this sense. The trans-Oceanic project nurtured in the Iberian peninsula was the response to the need of a global apprehension of the world. The precedents were in the commercial impulse of the new merchant class and the Renaissance humanistic culture. The world experienced the first great movement towards globalization. It was on the crest of this wave that the missionaries and merchants appeared in Japan. As a result, Japan entered world history. Therefore, the documentation produced in this period is relevant not solely for religious or political history, but also for the history of global economy and culture.

In the fourth place, and as a consequence of what we have just argued, the exchanges carried out during this period between the visitors and the natives greatly surpassed the field of religion and naval or military craft, they also affected the arts and literature and philosophy. We cannot forget the two first Western expeditions launched from Japanese territory happened in this period, the result thereof left in Spain an indelible trace which runs up to the present. Besides, the introduction of the European press in 1590 opened a new chapter in the field of documentation, with a number of originals to add to the new history of literature written in romaji, the first dictionaries of the Japanese language ----- Latin-Japanese, Portuguese-Japanese, and Japanese-Spanish -----, the first grammars, the first translations of European and Japanese literature.²

Fifth, part of the so called “missionary literature” should have become the foundation of the new science of Cultural Anthropology, three centuries ahead of the discipline we know today. For no other way can be read the exhaustive reports on customs and beliefs registered since the letters of Xavier and Vilela, through the *Treatise on Differences in Customs* (1585) by Frois, up to the rigorous rendering of the Japanese way of tea by the hand of Rodrigues. This great leap in the European literature of the Renaissance did not succeed in creating a new discipline, and was relegated to the missionary field. The reason for this cannot just be explained by remarking that the missionaries were expelled from Japan and the printers closed. The fact was that this historical event coincided with a change of cultural paradigm in Europe. North and South Europe were further split as a result of the Reform and the Counter-reform, knowledge was secularized and the New Science was to be found in physics not language or culture. The drive towards cultural comparison or literary exchange gave way under the pressure of modern, universal, monolythic science. European culture gave another step towards self-centeredness and after a couple of centuries a new sort of evangelism arose, this time in the name of a secular God. This is the Europe that would meet Japan in the nineteenth century. Between the old and the new, and unfillable gap had opened, and this is why the huge amount of documentation ever produced by the Iberian century has remained isolated

² Of paramount importance was the work of the Dominicans D. Collado and J. Orfanel, particularly their *Historia ecclesiastica de los sucesos de la cristiandad de Iapon: desde el año 1602, que entro en el la Orden de Predicadores, hasta el de 1620*.

in files and archives as well as museums of the religious orders, as well as national archives and museums spread through Spain, Portugal and the Vatican. This documentation and its sequel by the hand of priests and scholars of the orders up to the present, played no part in the foundation of the new Linguistics and Anthropology in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Sixth, the Eastern missions had in fact little support ever from the Vatican, the Portuguese and the Spanish crowns. This is also repeatedly exposed in the missionary literature since the earlier letters of Xavier. However, in the Spanish seventeenth century, the missionary adventure in Japan had pervaded popular literature up to some extent. The humanist B. Gracián had given expression to a popular view on the character of the Japanese, when he refers to them as the “Spaniards of the East”. The playwright Lope de Vega wrote a piece named “Triunfo de la fe en los reynos del Oriente” founding the so called “Missionary Theater”, a minor genre cultivated exclusively within religious circles but with popular acceptance in Counter-reformist Spain. The subsequent editions of the Lives of martyrs in Japan added to popular tastes in Catholic Spain. But all this literary and documentary work was carried on without governmental support. The Spanish crown never planned seriously to profit from a possible Japanese market, so it never invested enough. In seventeenth century Spain the weight of the American enterprise on the external side, plus the increasing inner weakness in the European arena, turned the state into a huge bureaucracy, and the original humanistic outlook which underlied expansionism declined into a self-defensive, self-centered, conservative mood. Japan was out of this map, all the missionary efforts remained confined in monasteries, and a great wealth of documentation forgotten in the archives and libraries ever after. The Spanish state never valued this part of national history enough. Spanish society evolved into a progressive alienation from the missionary history.

Seventh, influences and vestiges of the iberian century are present in the field of arts and crafts. The “nanban art” stands in a privileged position as the first example of a hybridization of Western motives and Japanese techniques in painting and handicrafts. On the other hand, South Spain architecture bears witness of the iberian century in Japan, and even a probable Japanese influence in the Spanish baroque, as is being investigated by a promising research team led by José M. Cabeza in the University of Sevilla. Besides, Spanish museums treasure a significant amount of Japanese weaponry.

Further, we cannot dismiss the fact that among the iberian missionaries there were two radically opposed approaches towards the Japanese mission. On the one hand, the first generation of missionaries led by Xavier were open-minded in matters of cultural exchange, they learned the language, adopted some customs, and had the Japanese nation in high esteem. They repeated in their reports that the Japanese were not like the Indians found in America, but a highly cultivated people, which made the mission bear fine prospects concerning conversion. The Japanese were an intelligent race, so they would eventually drop their pagan attachments and embrace the luminaries of universal faith. This view was to be held exemplarily by the Visitor Valignani, but when we approach the turn of the century, the European drive towards conservative nationalistic policies

influenced the mentalities, and as a result contrary strategies would prevail in the high ranks of the missionary hierarchy. In all, we have examples of both early nipophilia and nipofobia.

It remains a topic for further discussion how to connect the iberian period with the history of Japanese Studies. It is obvious that Japanese Studies as such were not constituted then and there, for should anyone sustain this view, he would be obliged to state that Japanese Studies in Spain and Portugal predate their constitution in Holland or Britain one century, and Germany or France three centuries. Neither Holland nor Britain date their own tradition of Japanese Studies up to the seventeenth century, although these countries have a long documentation history related to Japan, too. It is commonly understood that the foundation of this field of studies cannot predate the constitution of the modern social, anthropological and historical sciences. But at the same time perhaps we should also admit that if not formally, at least materially, the legacy of the iberian century leaves us a whole body of documents, among which a great number of reports represent a certain kind of discourse with an aspiration towards an objective understanding of Japanese civilization. An understanding gained from direct experience and knowledge of the language. What would have naturally yielded a basic framework for the eventual constitution of a field of human knowledge should there have been a path for its development, actually turned out into a historical failure, for the reasons already pointed out.

Rediscovery of Japan

Spain had to re-discover Japan. This time not across the ocean, but through the eyes of their neighbouring European nations. Between the seventeenth century and its legacy, and the new import of knowledge starting with the re-opening of Japan to Western nations, lies a profound gap never filled. Nineteenth century Spain was living a long decline of its status as a world empire, and wholly lacked the strength to perceive the momentum of establishing new diplomatic ties with an old acquaintance. And this in spite of the fact that the Manila Governor was officially invited by the Meiji Government to set a diplomatic office in Tokyo. The invitation was turned down and the opportunity of sharing destiny with other European nations missed. Japan had transformed from a neighbouring nation (in terms of the Philippines frontier) into a totally exotic and mystified country. However, the religious orders settled again in Japanese soil, and Japan was on the focus of some diplomats, travellers and men of letters, all on a private basis.³ During the period that goes from Meiji Japan to WWII other Western European nations normalized their relations with Japan, and Japanese Studies were formally constituted with official and academic support, in some cases even before the Meiji Restoration. Not so in Spain. To better understand the conditions that underlie this period in the pre-history of Japanese Studies in Spain, we should bear in mind the following points.

³ Such was the case of the novelist V. Blasco Ibáñez, who travelled to Japan in 1923-1924.

First, contrary to what happened in the case of other European countries with a previous history of relations with Japan, there is no connection between the new period of Japan awareness in Spain and the Iberian century. The constitution of Japanese Studies in the University of Leuven is a natural result from the exchanges in the seventeenth century. The British legacy from the same period inspired the British pioneers of Japanese Studies in Meiji Japan. Even in Russia, a long entertained linguistic and scholarly interest in their neighbour bore fruit in the constitution of academic studies. But Spain started anew, revealing one characteristic feature in Spanish history ---- a lack of sensitivity towards historic legacy, a history made of twists and turns, breaches and leaps, never looking back. As a result there was no sense of historic continuity in the new era of interest towards Japan.

Second, also contrary to the case of other European nations, all approaches to Japanese culture were made on a private basis. The Spanish government was ever too absorbed with inner troubles, and the disaster of the international experience of the late two centuries had turned the eyes inside. In spite of the flourishing interest in the Japanese arts, and the influence of French culture and then of *japoneries* in Barcelona and Madrid intellectual circles, there was never an official response and no Spanish governmental or academic institution ever supported materially the new seeds of interest in Japan.

Third, it is especially noticeable that, in spite of having a very long and pioneer tradition of publishing grammars and dictionaries of the Japanese language since the Iberian period, a tradition intermittently continued by the Dominicans and the Jesuits up to the twentieth century, in the modern period there was no Spanish central language school or institution that supported the new initiatives related to Japan. The consequences of this fact have been fatal to present day Japanese Studies in Spain, for against the case of other European nations, the study of Japanese culture, art, history and religious thought has been carried out through indirect sources or Spanish translations. The lack of a governmental support towards the study of the Japanese language is also the main reason why Spanish Universities have ignored the tradition set up by the missionary pioneers, and up to the present the academic study of Japanese topics has been made without the accompanying study of the language.

Fourth, Spanish knowledge of Japan in the nineteenth century and first half of twentieth century has depended mainly on external sources. This is not to say that there were absolutely no primary testimonies from Spaniards. The thin diplomatic contacts, some scarce intellectual mutual acquaintances made in Spain or France, a very few cases of travellers in all account for the whole of what we can record. Nineteenth century Spanish intellectual life concerned with international topics drew its acumen mainly from France, and secondarily from Britain or Germany. Paris played the role of pivoting cross-cultural encounter for South Europe. The rise of *japoneries* in the artistic field, interest in the Noh theater and Kabuki always concomitant with *japoneries*, the acquaintance with haiku, the romantic search for the hidden tenets of Japanese civilization and culture, related to old customs, to Buddhism and to archaic Shinto, literature about *geisha* and *samurai*, entered Spain from

Paris and had a reflection in the media of Barcelona and Madrid. All this fostered from within Japan by certain strategies towards the export of their own culture to the world.

Fifth, Spain took part in the fever for Japanese art objects that rushed from Paris to the rest of Western Europe. This was made possible in part thanks to the Spanish participation in the organization of Universal Expositions, privileged places for the exchange of art and knowledge with the Japanese representatives. The Expositions provided not only with a locus for artistic exchange but also fostered collectionism and general appreciation of Japanese culture. Cities like Barcelona and Madrid saw the spread of Japanese collections of artistic pieces in the public as well as the private sector. As a result there is a considerable amount of Japanese artistic objects in public museums and private foundations.

Sixth, when we try to locate the activities and initiatives related to Japan in nineteenth century Spain, we should not overlook the fact that as to what refers to cultural initiatives, Barcelona and Catalonia worked *de facto* independently from the rest of Spain. Quantitatively and qualitatively speaking, the amount of objects of art and publications related to Japan in this area surpasses that of Madrid as the reference of centralized Spain. In Barcelona, Catalanian artists could have easy access to artistic circles in France, so that this area worked more like an extension of French exchanges and initiatives, than as a part of Spain. This explains the impact of *japoneries* in the work of so many painters and designers from this area, and the particular tradition of Japanese related activities in Catalonia, from economic to academic, which perhaps should be accounted for as an exception to the general conditions applying to the rest of Spain. In time this unbalance has not been corrected, and the gap between Catalonia and the rest of Spain is still extant.

Seventh, exchanges with Japanese representatives on occasion of the encounters provided for in Expositions and other artistic or literary circles contributed to a general trend of Encyclopedism. Under this approach, from the end of the nineteenth century Spanish publishers released volumes on Japan within multi-volume world encyclopedias. Interest in Japanese geography and customs increased. Translations appeared. Besides, interest in Japanese theater gave rise to several publications and translations of classical as well as modern plays. Finally, haiku poetry caught the attention of most literary circles with an avant-gardist vision, as well as many intellectuals. The most prominent Spanish poets and playwrights of late nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth, R. Valle-Inclán, F. García Lorca, A. Machado, all were acquainted with the Japanese haiku and theater traditions. On the intellectual foreground, we can remind the debate on the character of the Japanese held between leading intellectuals in the beginning of the twentieth century, Azorín and M. Unamuno, or the speculations on haiku and literary style made by the latter in the liberal press. The Spanish haiku tradition initiated then, had two important consequences. First, haiku poetry has been nationalized, and has become a consistent line of poetic expression in the Spanish and the Catalan languages, with an ever thriving history that reaches its climax in the present moment. And secondly, haiku essays and research play an important role in the recent

history of Japanese Studies in Spain, as well as outside this field, as is the case with philosophers and literary critics.

Eighth, in the beginning of the twentieth century, religious catholic orders, old and new, settled in Japan, of which again the jesuits⁴ and the dominicans would eventually come to play a relevant part in the constitution of Japanese Studies in Spain. Their role, however, must be taken into consideration in two different periods. Up to WWII, they were unable to restore Japanese Studies, and they produced inside literature and reports regarding Meiji, Taisho or Showa Japan. But after WWII they have been instrumental in the formation of the present short tradition of Japanese Studies.

Finally, the impact of japanism in Spain, mainly through the mediation of French influence, which pervades intermittently all the history of Spanish perceptions and cultural fashions related to Japan, operates as a permanent factor in Spanish society since the modern period up to the very present, lying behind practically all advances in the slow progression towards the eventual constitution of Japanese Studies. The general traits of Spanish japanism do not differ basically from the same phenomenon in the rest of Western European Countries. It reveals its essential ambiguity between the two poles of bold admiration and racial discrimination, common to European japanism. It left a large imprint in the minds of people in general, thanks to the diffusion of images about the Japanese which circulated in the illustrated press of the first decades of the twentieth century. Besides, it contributed decisively to the fostering of collectionism and aesthetic appreciation among wealthy citizens and artists. As a result, many artists of the avant-gard reflected the influence of Japanism in their works. There is a whole sub-field of study in Spanish modern art history dedicated to Japanistic influenced artists, whose works provide us with another bulk of materials for study within the general field of Japanese Studies. Japanism also helped in the thirst for knowledge about Japanese society and civilization. In a parallel line to the introduction of japanism, we find a number of contemporary history-type reports, which start from coverages of Japan's expansionism since the Sino-Japanese war of 1895, and runs up to books of propaganda in favour of Japanese heroes of WWII.

The sources of Spanish japanism are triple. First, translations of French celebrated *japoneries* like the writings of P. Loti, and other foreign travellers, some of the latest trying to go beyond mere amazement to historic understanding. However, narratives around the myth of Japanese geishas predominated. Second, Spanish language sources like travellers to Japan or world-round travellers whose orientalist reports were covered in books as well as in illustrated magazines, and informed about Japanese ladies, girls and beauties, rickshaws, famous restaurants, Kyoto, Tokyo, Yokohama, kabuki actors, masks, cards. Among these the travel reports of the Guatemalan E. Gómez Carrillo written around 1910,⁵ played in Spain a similar role to the one played in France by P. Loti. He transmitted to the Spanish speaking readers his enthusiasm for the 'soul' of Japan, understood as

⁴ They returned to Japan in 1908.

the 'heroic' spirit of the samurais and the 'gallant' demeanour of the geishas. Third, translations of a few Japanese modern classics and books of cultural propaganda. Among them we also find apologetic narratives of WWII, but most interesting are the translation of works such as Nitobe's *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* in 1909, Okakura's *The Book of Tea*, and L. Hearn's *Kwaidan* in 1941.

A couple of further remarks would not be amiss in the context of the precedent paragraph. First, it is wrong to argue as is generally done that European (including Spanish) japanism as part of the general trend of orientalism is a ready-made product of westerners. Perhaps this may be consistently alleged about Middle Eastern orientalism or even about Chinese orientalism, but in the case of Japan, we cannot ignore the fact that since the period of the Meiji incorporation to the world of Western powers, one of the clues for the acceptance of this Eastern nation in the family of the Western states was an aggressive campaign of cultural exportation, especially prominent since the turn of the century. Several books like the ones quoted above reached Spain and were translated not because of a special interest of Spanish publishers in them, but because they were part of a huge apparatus of Japanese national propaganda in the cultural level. Second, the forties were a good moment for Japanese propaganda in Spain. The *Bushido* was reprinted in a Spanish campaign of moralisation of youth inspired in heroic literature of that type. This is due to dictator Franco's inconsistent strategy of alignments with the tripartite Axis first and then with USA.

We should also notice that if we compare the strength shown in the initiatives toward mutual approach during the whole of the twentieth century between Spain and Japan, the heaviest part relies on the Japanese side, Spain mostly playing the role of the receptive mate. An outstanding example of this is found in the history of Japanese Hispanicism compared to Spanish Japanology. We cannot express it otherwise than recognising that while Hispanicism in Japan has followed a regular process of constitution and growth more or less in the wake of the academic societies concerned with the French or the German languages and literatures, in Spain, due to the several anomalies that affect the first half of the twentieth century, which progressively isolated it from the rest of Europe, Japanology could not be constituted. As a consequence, the first generation of Spanish Japanologists, most of them scholars still active, was formed in the postwar period and in Japan, not in Spain. Calculated from the period when other academic pioneers in Japanology appeared in France, Britain or Germany we have an astonishing result of at least forty years delay, which explains to a great extent the present day situation of Japanese academic studies in Spain.

From Japanology to Japanese Studies

The turnout from WWII and the subsequent normalization of academic and political life in Japan proved decisive to opening for the first time an effective path towards the constitution of Japanese Studies in Spain. No more depending exclusively on foreign translations or reports from travellers. The era of Spanish Japanology finally emerged, mainly at the hands of a few missionaries

⁵ *El alma japonesa* (around 1910) and *El Japón heroico y galante* (1912).

who entered Japan in the fifties and sixties, with new energies, and in programs which included extensive study of the language. Catholic educational institutions in Japan were the platform which supported their work, and among them Sophia University⁶ has been seminal. Most part of this first and only generation of japanologists come from Sophia University. They carried the double task of catholic evangelism and at the same time providing Spain with studies on Japanese culture and translations of Japanese classics. Most of them stayed in Japan for very long, some of them forever, and others returned to fill positions at Spanish Universities. The double task required of them proved to be excessive in many cases. Many of the eventual fathers of Spanish Japanese Studies experienced some kind of inverse conversion and have turned to the apostolate of Japanese culture in Spain. Before returning many of them became lay people. But others in fact never returned, and this produced a rift in this generation making it less strong than it might have been should the ones who stayed have also joined forces with the returnees. In fact it was not so, and still newer generations of scholars keep having difficulties on returning if they stay in Japan longer than a couple of years or if they go there on their own. For the generation of Spanish japanologists, coming from the ranks of the catholic seminaries in Japan, did not have any other governmental or academic support on returning to Spain. They occupied marginal positions in the Spanish academic world, were unable to bring academic authorities to initiate study programs of Japanese language and culture, and in some cases even had to share their Japanese vocation with their responsibilities as professors in Departments of Spanish or English Language. Still, their mastery of the Japanese language helped them to publish translations of classical and modern literature as well as produce seminal studies in the fields of literature, culture, history or philosophy, some of which have appeared but recently, as a kind of legacy handed from the authors.

The historian and essayist L. Díez del Corral (1998) represents an isolated exception in the Spain of the fifties, when he launched a global re-interpretation of the problem of the destiny of Europe, applying a fine analysis of the mythical power of old tales in the context of the present dilemmas. His work, *The Rape of Europa: A Historic Interpretation of Our Times* (1954) had an impact in other European countries, Britain, France, Germany, Holland, and then also in Japan. The reason was that in Chapter 1 “Europe and Universal History”, he devoted one section to the problem of “East and West in a world culture”.⁷ Here he argues that in industrialized Japan the sense of discipline, productivity, and social organization can only be explained if we look for the roots in Medieval Europe. His main thesis was that after centuries of euro-centrism, finally in the twentieth century the Faustic legacy of dominion through science and technology had changed its vortex, and had been displaced towards the East. Japan is the most relevant case study to support Díez’s thesis. The essay had a great reception in Japan, and the author was invited to lecture here. The trip inspired a second book, *From the New to the Old World* (1974, 38), again translated into Japanese, and the author invited two more times. In all three visits from 1961 to 1972. Two years later, in 1974,

⁶ Founded in 1913.

Díez del Corral wrote a new prologue, where he confirmed his position about “Japan, the greatest raper of Europe” (1974, 33-38). Here in a few strokes he traverses the whole cultural history of Japan to try to explain the enormous singularity of Japan’s case in the whole of Asia, as an able assimilator of the most efficient elements of European civilization.⁸ Díez del Corral is a fine example of the Quixotic character of a great part of the legacy of Spanish Japanology, being himself an isolated scholar in the field, and leaving no disciples to follow.

The first literary products from the authors formed at Sophia University appeared in the sixties and seventies, some of which were published in Japan and had little diffusion in Spain. Some translations made during these decades have not been published yet. During this period some Spanish intellectuals from Sophia University engaged in interreligious dialogue, and promoted a sort of new humanism, inspired in the stress on the value of the individual as ‘person’. The translation into Spanish of Watsuji’s *Fudo* in 1973 by A. Mataix was part of a project of translations that included other basic works of philosophical popularity in Japan, a project that collapsed too soon. A. Mataix is representative of the type of intellectual that sprung up these years from Sophia University. The jesuit J. Fernández is on his part a good representative of the scholar specialised in comparative literature, but whose work remains basically ignored in Spain. Other professors left the priesthood and became Spanish teachers all through Japan, while pursuing their vocational study of Japanese culture. They made professional careers at Japanese Universities. We have to mention with honors the case of another jesuit later secularized and married, prof. J. L. Álvarez Taladriz, who was original from Sophia University and spent his later years as professor of Spanish at Eichi University in Osaka, while devoting to the edition of texts from the iberian century with a scholarly and critical perspective. At Eichi University he coincided with another lay jesuit original from Sophia University, and with a similar name, J. López Álvarez, an astounding personality, being the first foreigner ever to enter the Department of Buddhist Studies at Tokyo University, but who left his promising scholarly career to marry and return to Spain, where he became the promoter of Japanese Studies at Granada University.

The seventies mark another turning point for the history of Japanese Studies in Spain. The first doctoral thesis on Japanese matters are read. There are only a few essays with scholarly acumen to be found, but they do not depend anymore of the work done by the religious orders in Japan. The doctoral dissertation on Japanese *haiku* by first-rate translator F. Rodríguez-Izquierdo, presented at Sevilla University and published in 1972⁹, might be considered the point of departure of Japanese Studies in Spain. The reason is that its topic is proper of a specialist, and the methodology of research is subjected to general academic pre-requisites in other fields. Besides, it is long enough to be reckoned as a research study and not merely an essay. The dividing line between

⁷ *El rapto de Europa: Una interpretación histórica de nuestro tiempo*, Alianza 1974, 93-96.

⁸ The “Prologue” has been also published independently as *Perspectives of a Raped Europe (Perspectivas de una Europa raptada*, Hora H 1974).

⁹ *El haiku japonés: historia y traducción*, Hiperión 1972 (2nd. Ed. 1994).

Japanology and Japanese Studies started to be drawn in this decade. Generally speaking, returning missionaries have played the role of other European early japanologists. They cover very wide fields, like history of Japanese culture, history of thought, history of literature, history of art, and some of them have even to combine research in more than one field. Perhaps an archetypical case is shown to us by emeritus Prof. Antonio Cabezas. He went to Japan as a missionary and started his entrusted task at Sophia University. He learned the language to the point of mastery. Studying Japanese literature he went through a reverse conversion. He left the Jesuits and married, becoming Prof. of the Spanish language at Kyoto Gaidai. Cabezas passed his full professional career in Japan, and while learning and translating literature he got acquainted with the pioneering work of Prof. Álvarez Taladriz, the expert in the iberian century. He became a disciple of the latter, and started studying seriously the related documentation. After retiring he came to spend his days at his hometown in Andalusia (Huelva) where he now resides. Cabezas is a japanologist in the full sense, i. e. he masters the Japanese language, classic and modern, and Japanese culture. He is the only Spaniard ever to write anything near a history of Japanese literature,¹⁰ while being the translator of old classics such as the *Man'yōshū* or the *Ise monogatari*, pre-modern classics like Saikaku, Basho, modern poets like Takuboku and contemporaries like Mishima. At the same time, Cabezas has written a long study on the iberian century,¹¹ demonstrating that he is the only successor of Álvarez Taladriz. This study has become the reference for future research in the field of missionary history in Japan, or in general Japanese sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. And the author never had an appointment at a Spanish University. His position in Spanish Japanology might be compared to that of D. Keene in USA.

Another important aspect in relation to the connection between Spanish Japanologists and the constitution of Japanese Studies, is that these Japanologists, contrary to the case of their European and American peers, have not had the chance to create their own legacy at universities. The new generation of researchers in the field of Japanese Studies, who have enjoyed a scholarship and done research in Japan never had the chance of studying under the tutorship of these great pioneers.¹² The result is that between this first generation of specialists and the younger researchers there is again a gap, and between Japanology and Japanese Studies in Spain there is no continuity. The principal initiative in the formation of a young generation of researchers must be credited to the Japanese government and its strategy on scholarships for foreign researchers. The popularly so called “Monbusho scholarships” in the first place, and adding to this the generous support of the Japan Foundation multiple programs have been since the eighties the main source of help for enabling many new young researchers fill the historic gap, and join forces with their colleagues in

¹⁰ *La literatura japonesa* (1990) Hiperión.

¹¹ *El siglo ibérico en Japón: La presencia hispano-portuguesa en Japón (1543-1643)* [1995] U. de Valladolid

¹² See a profile of some of the most outstanding members of the Spanish old generation in Barlés, 57-64.

the rest of Europe to form a broader research community concomitant with the present European process of convergence at the level of high education.

We cannot but understand as part of this process the opening of BA degrees in Japanese Studies at some key Universities all through Spanish territory, a process initiated in the academic year 2003-2004. To the Autonomous Madrid University, the joint program of the Autonomous Barcelona university together with the private Pompeu Fabra University (Barcelona), and the virtual degree offered at the Universitat Operta de Catalonia, the year 2004-2005 Salamanca University has joined the heading group. Other universities will join in the near future, helping to consolidate an all but long expected academic platform that will permit scholars to have a place to work, do research and educate younger disciples. Japanese Studies in Spain are at a turning point. The number of researchers has grown enough to make a solid group to contribute to other European institutions in Japanese Studies. Now it is necessary to open the doors for those new researchers who still are in the periphery because of lack of institutional support, to have a chance to join the new academic programs when they come back from Japan and so, not to join unemployment or emigration. It is foreseen that in the European process of convergence, a number of MA, and eventually PhD degrees will be offered in the future.

It is barely needed to establish research institutes for Japanese Studies. Historically speaking we can mention the existence of several associations, like the Spain Asian Studies Association and the Asia-Pacific Studies Association in Spain, formed basically by historians of colonial Spain. This latter recently experienced a new process of reorganisation widening its scope, incorporating scholars from different fields, and establishing regional committees for Area Studies, but after their latest national Congress it has relaxed apparently, and there is to be seen whether it will be able to respond to its new frame of work and the new demands of Japanese Studies. Then, the Spanish Association of Japanese Studies was founded by María Rodríguez, and is still striving to overcome the phase of semi-private orientation.

At universities we do not find yet one single Research Institute nor a Research Project related to Japanese Studies as such. At Valladolid University, the late Pr. José M. Ruiz founded the only Japanese Studies Institute, with high prospects, but insufficient support. Now it has been converted into the Centre for Asian Studies. Another case is the Spain-Japan Cultural Centre of Salamanca University, a joint project with support from the Japanese Embassy, the Japan Foundation, and a number of Japanese companies and academic institutions, another ambitious initiative with high prospects, but which still needs to be re-orientated into a Research Institute. As to Research Projects, the Complutense University of Madrid has been carrying along for years significant research and teaching on Asian Art, including Japan. The Project is called "Group Asia". At Zaragoza University, Pr. E. Barlés is heading a Research Project on East Asian art objects at Spanish museums and collections. Finally, Pr. José M. Cabeza is leading another project related to architecture and the conception of space, drawing basically from East Asian materials, at Sevilla University. These three isolated examples have certain features in common. First, none of them is

attached to an “East Asian Studies Area”, the only academic section approved by the Education Ministry to regulate Japanese Studies at present. Second, none of them deals exclusively with Japan. And third, the first two projects are carried on without linguistic support in Japanese, while the third one (due to the stimulus of its director, fluent in Japanese) is in the process of acquaintanceship with the language. This shifts our attention to the already mentioned fact that many scholars who have contributed significant research on Japan do not belong to Japanese Studies. Such is the case of the historians J. Gil,¹³ E. Sola,¹⁴ and R. Valladar¹⁵ and most of the researchers in Japanese art, although the jesuit Pr. F. García Gutiérrez (Sevilla University) has been teaching and publishing extensively for several decades. E. Barlés recognises the debt to this champion of Japanese art of all young researchers in the field.¹⁶ She reminds us that Japanese art entered Spanish universities in the sixties and since the eighties there is significant research in three fields ---- art objects in Spanish collections, influence of Japanese models on Spanish artists, and the history of studies in Spain related to Japanese art.¹⁷ No need to stress that these lines of research confirm our thesis that Japanese art is also being studied from outside the field of Japanese Studies. Finally, the only University offering a degree in Japanese language is Barcelona Autonomous University, which amply precedes the rest of universities in three decades.

Since the previous government, the change of millennium has seen a new awareness grow in Spain about the present and future importance of Asia in the European strategies related to globalization. The government has declared Asia a first priority in its foreign policy, and since 200, Casa Asia, a key organisation which combines the official status and support of the Foreign Ministry with Catalanian vision of enterprise (it is located in Barcelona) is eager to promote all sorts of strategies and create the necessary programs to help the academic community constitute itself strongly and efficiently. The stage is ready, let the play begin.

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