

Abstracts:

KEYNOTE SPEECH 1

Friday

15th Sept. 2023

9:50 – 11:00

D22

James SHIELDS

Bucknell University, U. S. A.

Buddhist Politics as Revolutionary Praxis:

A Case study from Japan

Despite the common belief that Buddhists have rarely if ever engaged in movements directed at political liberation (as opposed to supporting the state), modern Japan provides various examples of progressive and radical Buddhist politics. Soon after the brief but traumatizing attempt to disestablish Buddhism in the years immediately following the Meiji Restoration of 1868, we see a number of experiments in merging Buddhist ideas with those of socialism, anarchism, and communism, based on the conviction that capitalism is a primary source of individual and collective suffering. Succeeding decades saw the incursion of increasingly sophisticated forms of radicalism from the West and Russia. By the early Showa period (1926–1936), the works of Marx and Engels were embraced by a few young Buddhist activists, just as the prevailing ideological winds were shifting strongly in the opposite direction. The most significant example of this trend is the life and work of Nichiren Buddhist layman Seno'o Girō (1889–1961), founder of the Youth League for Revitalizing Buddhism, a movement of young Buddhist activists that lasted from 1931 until it was forcibly shut down by the government in 1937. With reference to the work of Seno'o as well as more recent movements such as Engaged and Critical Buddhism, in this talk I argue that any typology of "religion" and "politics" must confront some vexed issues regarding the meaning and significance of both terms in a (Mahāyāna) Buddhist context; in particular, whether or not Buddhism is (or can be) "agnostic" with respect to: a) the structure of a particular society; b) power relations; and c) "ideology," whether secular or religious. The radical Buddhists of modern Japan were not so much in *conflict* with the political as they were *engaged* with the political—indeed, they saw no clear distinction between the categories of religion and politics—though this was a stance that put them in conflict with the Japanese state.

Friday

15th Sept. 2023

11:00 – 11:30

Section 1, D22

Japanese title:

Veronika ABBASOVÁ

Palacký University, Olomouc, Czech Republic

From *The Tale of Genji* to *Towazugatari* – three centuries of the Japanese court novel

『源氏物語』から『とほずがたり』まで—宮廷文学の三百年

The Tale of Genji, written by the court lady Murasaki Shikibu (c. 973 – c. 1031), is one of the best-known works of Japanese literature, often called the world's first psychological novel. Written in the peak of the Heian period, which is now considered the golden age of Japanese court culture, the complex novel enjoyed attention of many readers already during the author's life, later becoming a rich well of inspiration from which Japanese writers have continued to draw for centuries to come.

Towazugatari (literally “A tale no one asked for”, translated into English as *The Confessions of Lady Nijō*) is a candid autobiographic novel created by another court lady, known as Lady Nijō (1258 – after 1306) at the end of the Kamakura period; at that time, the formerly hegemonic noble class was under increasingly strict control of the rising military regime and the once splendid imperial court entered its twilight years. Far from seeing her writing celebrated, Lady Nijō was doomed to have her work fade into obscurity until the discovery of its incomplete copy in the Imperial Household Archive in 1940.

Taking into account the transformation Japanese society and culture underwent during the three centuries dividing these two important works of Japanese literature, this paper aims to explore the many parallels, confluences and contrasts between them.

Friday

15th Sept. 2023

11:30 – 12:00

Section 1, D22

Nobuko TOYOSAWA

Czech Academy of Sciences, Praha, Czech Republic

Geibun, Manchurian Literature, and the Egalitarian Utopia

Through reading the most comprehensive literary magazine of Manchukuo, *Geibun* 藝文 (*Arts and Culture*, 1942–1943), this presentation examines the competing discourses of Manchurian literature that were ardently debated since the 1920s. Coincided with the outbreak of the Pacific War in December 1941, the journal reflected the ideological climate of the time, filling its discursive space with glorification of the Great East Asia War. Yet, my analysis also reveals many meanings of Manchurian literature surrounded by multitude of opinions about the war and Manchukuo, and the world-historic significance of Great East Asia.

The presentation highlights the Japanese authors who opposed the idea of Manchurian literature being an emulation of Japanese literature. They argued that independent Manchurian literature could be a constructive unifying force in the development of their multiethnic culture. While insisting on identifying distinct “Manchurian” qualities rooted in the local soil and culture of independent Manchukuo, however, these authors took Japan’s superior position in East Asia for granted and imposed it on Manchurian literature. Therefore, their egalitarian cause to achieve unity among poor farmers became implicated in the same hierarchical order that justified the war, aligned with the state agenda of the formation of Japan-centered Manchukuo.

Friday

15th Sept. 2023

11:00 – 11:30

Section 2, D31

Zuzana KUBOVČÁKOVÁ

Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

The Zen River: Confluences of Chan and Zen in Dōgen's Writings

The concept of “confluences” brings to mind an image of river and the joining of streams, I wish to employ the various images of waterways – rivers, streams, and currents – flowing in the Chinese Chan and Japanese Zen tradition. Inspecting the writings of Zen master Dōgen 道元禪師 (1200–1253) of the Sōtō school, I will present examples from both his Chinese and Sino-Japanese texts to illustrate the various symbols and meanings behind waters and rivers. Starting with the general notion of a river in the Chan lore, I will proceed to elucidate the concept of river in Dōgen's “Rivers and Mountains Sūtra” (“Sansuikyō” 山水經) of the *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (*Shōbō genzō* 正法眼藏) and contrast it with his other mentions of this expression in the Chinese dharma talks and poems of the *Extensive Record of Zen Master Dōgen* (*Eihei kōroku* 永平廣錄). Reaching into the rich literary legacy of Dōgen, I will thus create another stream of words and images that will demonstrate the confluence and continuation of the continental Chan tradition in the Japanese master's writings.

Friday

15th Sept. 2023

11:30 – 12:00

Section 2, D31

Japanese title:

Jiří MATELA

Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

How do you *do* in Japanese: On the most verb-like verb of Japanese

日本語は如何にスルか？日本語の最も動詞らしい動詞を巡って

The opposition of DO-type-of-expression and BECOME-type-of-expression (スル表現とナル表現) in the Japanese language has been known at least since Teramura (1976). This opposition was later developed into a typological category by Ikegami (1981) and has since been extensively examined. While most of the focus has been on Japanese predominantly being a BECOME-language, there has also been criticism regarding the relative preference of constructions with the verb *suru* (Noda, 2015) or the core meaning of this verb (Takebayashi, 2008). There is a strong justification for examining *suru* given that it is the second most frequently used verb in Japanese (following *iu*, according to Tono et al., 2013) and one of the first verbs that JFL students learn. However, the very nature of this expression is highly problematic.

In this presentation, I will discuss the identity of the Japanese verb *suru* from a constructionist perspective. I will highlight the diverse functions of the expression and the challenges in defining its identity, both as a lexical item and as a functional (grammatical) morpheme. Additionally, I will argue for the separation of the typological concept of a DO-language (スル(型)言語) from the verb *suru*. My conclusions will support the Radical Construction Grammar framework (Croft, 2001), which views a construction as the elementary unit of a grammar.

Friday

15th Sept. 2023

13:30 – 14:00

Section 3, D22

Japanese title:

Vít ULMAN

Palacký University, Olomouc, Czech Republic

The Development of the Japanese Compound Particles throughout the Ages

日本語に於ける複合助詞の発展について

The Japanese compound particles (e.g., *ni tai shite* 'towards', *wo motte* 'by means of', etc.) represent a salient feature of the modern standard Japanese language. They typically follow the pattern case particle + verb in a converbal form and fulfill functions similar to the secondary prepositions in European languages, such as the English prepositions *about*, *against*, *along*, etc.

However, this has not always been the case. There is a significantly lower number of these compounds present in older texts, which means that most of them clearly grammaticalized during the historical period. In this paper, their genesis throughout history will be tracked using the extant textual evidence and the major factors contributing to their proliferation will be discussed. Some of those compound particles were clearly influenced by certain Chinese constructions. The key to their genesis seems to be the traditional Japanese reading of Chinese texts – the so-called *kambun kundoku*. The Chinese expressions on which they were patterned will be presented and the grammaticalization clines explained with ample examples. The aim is to present a balanced view of the compound particles taking into account both the contact influence and the internal factors of the development of Japanese.

Friday

15th Sept. 2023

14:00 – 14:30

Section 3, D22

Arkadiusz JABŁOŃSKI

Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland

What is (un)inflected in Japanese – and why?

Japanese is traditionally classified as an agglutinative language, according to the morphological typology proposed originally by von Humboldt 200 years ago. This general postulate is implemented in a variety of ways in grammatical sources.

Japanese nominal elements are traditionally considered uninflected. This is probably due to the ideographic (sinographic) features of their lexical stems (the notion virtually absent from the descriptions of Japanese). Adnominal grammatical markers are typically described as “particles” (of ambiguous status, number and functions).

Verbal elements are literally distinguished as inflected. Still, their lexical stems (conjugational themes) are identified as a sinogram and a syllabogram next to it in writing. Inflectional endings are viewed as “auxiliary verbs” (of known number and functions, but with further inflection).

No commonly shared classification is applied towards the uninflected elements. This results in ambiguous status of the copula, traditionally described as alleged inflectional ending of uninflected adjectives, in terms possibly distant from the constituent of nominal predicate in general linguistics.

The above status quo significantly influences the intelligibility of Japanese grammatical sources. Neither stem boundaries nor word form boundaries are clearly defined. The paper presents some methodological postulates towards the paradigmatic approach to the language.

Friday

15th Sept. 2023

14:50 – 15:20

Section 4, D22

Ondřej HÝBL

Czech-Japanese Association, Praha, Czech Republic

Inspiration, Imitation, Admiration

Three different attitudes towards Japanese traditional theatre form *Kyōgen* in Europe during last three decades

Rising interest in Japanese traditional theatre among European and American scholars was stopped by Japanese engagement in 2nd world war. However, after economically and logistically complicated immediate post-war period, interest in Japanese theatre starts to increase again in late 70', developing into direct collaborations between Japanese artist and performers in USA and Western Europe after 1980 and Eastern Europe after 1990.

Aim of this paper is to go over direct collaborations between Japanese teachers from different families and artists in Italy, namely Zenchiku Family of Ōkura school and Italian performer Luca Moretti, France *Théâtre du Soleil* of Ariane Mnouchkine and Shigeyama (Kyōto) and Nomura (Tōkyō) families and last, but not least, unique collaboration between Czech Republic based troupe The *Kyōgen Theatre* and Shigeyama family from Kyōto. Considering totally different attitudes towards the same genre, different concepts of introducing of Japanese art to 3 European countries and corresponding different attitudes of Japanese teachers could be great enhancement of our thoughts and inspiration, how to handle also other Japanese arts. Wider picture about similar activities in the U.S.A. (San Francisco based Theatre of Yugen, its leader Yuriko Doi and Nomura family collaboration) and Japan based foreigners (Jonah Salz, Timothy Medlock and Don Kenny) projects will be mentioned as well.

Friday

15th Sept. 2023

15:20 – 15:50

Section 4, D22

Japanese title:

Igor PRUŠA

Ambis College Prague, Praha, Czech Republic

Scandal in Japan: Transgression, Performance and Ritual

日本におけるスキャンダル

The aim of this talk is twofold. First, I introduce my new book “Scandal in Japan: Transgression, Performance and Ritual”, published by Routledge in August 2023. Second, I offer a novel, and somewhat controversial understanding of Japanese scandal as a highly mediatized social ritual, which tends to preserve the status quo while generating commercial profit for the media.

I believe that this kind of alternative approach facilitates our understanding of the patterns of behavior and sociocultural norms/values tied to media scandals in Japan. By analyzing these patterns, I illuminate the ritualized means of public apology and the cultural realities of public shaming in Japan. This is important because most scandal denouements in Japan do not get by without a punitive ritual of emotional confession, temporary exclusion, and eventual reintegration. This practice, as I will argue, can be paralleled to the punitive ritual of Japanese ‘civil religion’ (*shimin shūkyō*) which teaches about the act of becoming impure (*kegare*) and the necessity of the sacred (*hare*) to purify itself (*misogi*) from the pollution.

My focus will be on the main transgressor and his/her public performance, i.e., a complex series of words and actions that produce a valuable result in scandal. I will illustrate how the sociocultural act of confession, apology and exclusion is turned into an orchestrated pseudo-event with a high degree of ritualization. By doing so, I hope to offer an opportunity to see how scandals play out in a liberal democratic system that differs in many respects from the United States and Europe.

KEYNOTE SPEECH 2

Saturday

16th Sept. 2023

9:00 – 10:00

D22

James FARRER

Sophia University, Tōkyō, Japan

Japan Remade Abroad: How the Japanese Restaurant Abroad Reinvented Japanese Cuisine and Restructured Global Gastronomy

The growing prestige of Japanese restaurant cuisine has changed the preferred styles of conspicuous culinary consumption among well-off diners in cities worldwide, simultaneously upending taste and professional hierarchies in a globalizing culinary field (Farrer 2021). Even the organization of restaurant cuisines inside of Japan have been impacted by this “Japanese turn” in global urban foodways (Yamashita 2020). In short, Japanese cuisine conquered the world, but in some respects at least, the world also conquered Japanese cuisine. Based on a long-term study of how Japanese restaurants spread around the world, this lecture lays out the story of how Japanese cuisine went from a marginal cultural novelty in the early twentieth century to the pinnacle of fine dining by the early twenty-first (Farrer and Wank 2023). The rise of Japanese cuisine as a food fashion first made an imprint on urban foodscapes in the 1920s, then gradually came to impact the shape of fine dining in the 1970s and 80s. During the latter period, Japanese chefs began to make an impression on French and American fine dining, creating new styles of cooking and presentation (Yamashita 2020). These in turn have come to shape Japanese cuisine itself. The larger story is twofold. First, we see the emerge of a globalized field of fine dining in which Japanese cuisine and Japanese culinary practices have played an outsized role. Second, we see a process in which Japanese cuisine is no longer simply “made in Japan” and exported abroad, but also being recreated and redefined in transnational networks of culinary labor and cultural influence. Ultimately, we have to reconsider what it means to see “Japanese cuisine” (and Japanese culture more broadly) as a global and not simply a national phenomenon.

Saturday

16th Sept. 2023

10:10 – 10:40

Section 5, D31

Japanese title:

Klemen SENICA

Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Pula, Croatia

A “Magical Country”: Japan in the Travel Writings of Alma M. Karlin

『魔法の国』：Alma M. Karlin の旅行記に見る日本

The travelogues of women travellers have become increasingly popular with both the general public and scholars since the beginning of the 20th century. In Slovenia, the Slovenian-German intellectual, world traveller and writer Alma M. Karlin (1889-1950) has received particular attention. She set off on a journey around the world just one year after the end of the First World War. Her primary destination was Japan, which had already fascinated her during her pre-war stay in London. However, a combination of circumstances prevented her from sailing directly from Europe to Japan. Karlin did not set foot on Japanese soil until 1922. Much to her delight, the images she had formed of the country and its people long before her departure matched those of the real world. Karlin spent a year in Tokyo and became enchanted by Japan and its people. She described her experiences of the country and her encounters with the people she met during her trip in detail in her travel book, *Einsame Weltreise*, which was published after her return to her native Celje. In my paper I will focus on images of Japan and the Japanese in the early 1920s as represented by Alma M. Karlin.

Saturday

16th Sept. 2023

10:40 – 11:10

Section 5, D31

Japanese title:

Zuzana ROZWAŁKA

Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

Tracing the Development of the *Harakiri* Stereotype in Czech Archival Media

チェコの新聞と大衆紙における「ハラキリ」のステレオタイプの発展をめぐって

During the late 19th century, the first Japanese, a group of acrobats and magicians, visited the Czech lands, prompting a famous Czech publicist to write a feuilleton about their performance. Intriguingly, he claimed to be relieved that the performers did not demonstrate any of the supposedly well-known Japanese traditions, such as bathing or *harakiri*. These two things were probably among the few, if not the only, knowledge he had about Japan at that time.

At that time, the word “harakiri” and the notion of it being a Japanese national custom practiced daily were primarily disseminated through newspaper articles and geographical publications. The first travelogue on Japan in the Czech language did not appear until the 1880s. The term “harakiri” got more and more prevalent over time, contributing to the formation of the *harakiri* stereotype.

My presentation aims to explore the historical usage and development of the term “harakiri” in Czech archival media, shedding light on the formation of the *harakiri* stereotype and its penetration into the general consciousness. Through an analysis of Czech archival media, I will identify certain waves in their occurrences and discuss their causes within the broader context of intercultural contacts and the formation of the general image of Japan.

Saturday

16th Sept. 2023

10:10 – 10:40

Section 6, D22

Lenka VYLEŤALOVÁ

Palacký University, Olomouc, Czech Republic

Japanese restaurants in Central and Eastern Europe 100 years ago and now: Spaces of transnational imaginary and cultural diffusion

With the global spread of Japanese corporate capital, rapid diffusion of popular culture, and an unprecedented rise in international travel, Japanese cuisine has known a great boom for several decades now. Through both globalization and localization processes, Japanese restaurants abroad have contributed to the transmission and transformation of Japanese food, its preparation, presentation, and consumption styles.

Based on archival data and an ethnographic fieldwork, this presentation will explore contemporary Japanese restaurants in Prague and Kyiv, considering them as social spaces, where not only food, but more largely culture is offered. Specific eateries attract specific communities and contribute to an imaginary of what consuming Japanese food (and culture) represents. Central for this narrative are cultural intermediaries who act as agents of dissemination and legitimation of tastes, products, or behaviors. I shall discuss who are these cultural intermediaries in present, as well who acted as such figures 100 years ago.

Saturday

16th Sept. 2023

10:40 – 11:10

Section 6, D22

Marek MIKEŠ

Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

Contrasts and confluences in the reception of Japanese digital games in different markets

Japan is one of the most influential producers of digital games and games from Japan have been consumed worldwide since at least the 1980s. While Japanese games played a big role in rebuilding the American video game market after the “video game crash of 1983” (or *Atari shock*), the process of their reception has been different in Europe under individual countries’ socioeconomic conditions.

The goal of this paper is to identify what part Japanese games play in “gaming canons” of different countries based on various rankings and best game lists made by game journalists throughout the last three decades (1990s to 2020s) and to see to what extent the position of Japanese games changed through time with the hypothesis being, that the canons would be contrasting in the 1990s and converging over time under the influence of globalizing forces.

Saturday

16th Sept. 2023

11:30 – 12:00

Section 7, D22

Japanese title:

Ivan RUMÁNEK

Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

What can the three principal ancient sources tell us about the origin of Japonic

上代の主な三種歴史資料はジャポニック語族の起源について何を告げられるか

The most ancient sources we have concerning the earliest prehistory and history of the Japanese archipelago and its ethnogenetic processes are the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* chronicles and *fudoki* “gazetteers”. Out of the lastly mentioned, it is the *fudoki* of the Izumo province (*Izumo Fudoki*) that is crucial – firstly, since it represents the only surviving complete *fudoki* from any province, and secondly, because it describes the legends of the area to which one of the main deities, Susanoo, is reported to have been expelled from the *Takamanohara*. Susanoo established a lineage which subsequently represented a competing power to the central Yamato ruling lineage. These two local centres of power were the potential cores of political, and perhaps also ethnic, identities whose fusion contributed to the formation of the Japanese ethnos and nation. This is why I consider a careful scrutiny of these three sources as one of the vital starting points when attempting to sketch a background to the formation of the Japanese language and ethnicity. My paper gives an overview of what these three core sources offer us in this respect.

Saturday

16th Sept. 2023

12:00 – 12:30

Section 7, D22

Japanese title:

Zsófia HIDVÉGI

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

First among equals – the Okinawan linguistic revitalization

対等な者同士—沖縄語の言語活性化

The premise of the language revitalization theory is that every language is equally important and has its own value, and with the loss of the language we will lose the cultural wisdom and knowledge of the community. However, the revitalization movements often face the problem of standardization, because of their limited resources, or because they are following the same colonizing language policy and ideology that caused the language shift in the first place.

In Japan there are several indigenous and endangered language varieties, amongst which only the Ainu language is supported by the government. The six languages of the Ryūkyū Islands are not acknowledged by the legislation nor by the national language policy; however, they are supported on the prefectural government level. The Okinawa Prefectural Government has started officially a revitalization program in 2013. They chose the *Shimakutuba* (the language(s) of the islands) umbrella term for the local languages so they could include all the local varieties. However, if we examine their initiatives, we can see, that there is an inequality in the representation of the Ryūkyūan languages. The aim of the presentation is to introduce the ongoing programs and to examine the promotion of the language varieties.

Saturday

16th Sept. 2023

14:00 – 14:30

Section 8, D22

Japanese title:

Judit Éva ZENTAI

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

The challenges of the interpretation of Western anatomical knowledge in the Early Modern Japanese Medical history

近世医療史における西洋の解剖学的知識の解釈への挑戦

It is well known that natural sciences in Japan have been changed remarkably thanks to the spread of Western (European) science, especially the medicine is a typical area where there are many examples to support this statement. The anatomy and surgery were both fields that radically changed the way of thinking of medicine at the time. All these changes were challenges for the Japanese scientists and physicians at the time because they had to understand new concepts on structure and mechanism of the human body. Several Japanese scholars (including who tried to promote communication as interpreters with Dutch officials, travellers, or traders, or studied the Dutch language) have made attempts to translate famous scientific and medical works from Dutch into Japanese. Therefore, it can be said that interpreting and understanding the new Western scientific and medical (including anatomical) knowledge (written in Dutch) has been a real challenge.

The aim of the presentation to review the milestones in the history of Japanese medicine, with a special focus on the Early Modern period and highlight the challenges of the interpretation of Western anatomical works through some examples taken from medical writings of the period.

Saturday

16th Sept. 2023

14:30 – 15:00

Section 8, D22

Japanese title:

Roman KODET

University of West Bohemia, Plzeň, Czech Republic

Continuity and Discontinuity in the Early Meiji Period

明治初期における連続と断絶

The Meiji Restoration ushered a new period of Japanese history. After more than 250 years, the Tokugawa regime was destroyed, and Japan set itself up the past of Westernizing reforms. This development was, however, nothing granted. The leaders of the new imperial government did not have any clear plan or timetable for change in Japan. Though their overall goal was to create a centralized government and ensure Japanese security face to face the threat of the European imperialism, the opinions on accomplishing this goal were quite heterogeneous. With the historical hindsight through which we assess the results of their policies, the Meiji Period can be viewed as an effort to depart from the Japanese past and achieve recognition and equality with the West through it. On the other hand, though the key figures of the new regime publicly proclaimed their dedication to a Westernizing change, many of their steps were ideologically based on the assumption of a return to an idealized Japanese past. Therefore, their policies were sometimes contradictory, which influenced the nation and state-building of the Early Meiji Period. Therefore, this paper will focus on the motivations of the reform movement, its ideological origins, and seemingly incompatible goals of bringing Japan towards the modern world and concurrently reviving its glorious past.

Saturday

16th Sept. 2023

15:20 – 15:50

Section 9, D22

Balázs SZABÓ

Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, Hungary

Professor or Civil Servant? University Autonomy, Scholarly Freedom in Meiji Japan

The budding Meiji state, in its pursuit of Western technology, recognized that in order to understand it fully the introduction of basic sciences and scientific methods was also necessary – this led to the establishment of modern Japanese higher education, with the Tokyo Imperial University as its first result. Although in accordance with the development of scientific and academic spheres corresponding ideas of university autonomy and freedom of research were introduced, it was not long before conflict broke out between the government, which was in the very process of creating the ideological foundations of the nation, and academics publishing their results. In this article I aim to examine two of these cases: the Kume incident of 1893 and the Tomizu affair of 1905. Both cases ended with the suspension, and then the dismissal of the professors, but there were significant differences: while in the case of the historian Kume Kunitake the government pushed its decision through without any opposition from the university, the Tomizu affair ended in a scandal which rocked the whole Japanese academic world, forcing the government to retreat. These two incidents adumbrated a series of affairs between Japanese government and universities, drawing the outlines of the fight: freedom of research and the right to publish results.

Saturday

16th Sept. 2023

15:50 – 16:20

Section 9, D22

Robert CROKER

Nanzan University, Nagoya, Japan

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policies at Japanese Universities

Like Japanese society, Japanese universities are becoming more diverse, with greater numbers of foreign students and students with foreign roots, neuro- and body-diverse students, students who identify as LGBTQ+, and students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. In response, many Japanese universities have developed some form of explicit diversity, equity and inclusion (DE&I) policy. Diversity policies strive to broaden the types of students entering a university, equity policies aim to promote equal educational outcomes for all students, and inclusion policies seek to help students develop a sense of acceptance and belonging at their university.

To realize these DE&I policies, many Japanese universities have created catchy slogans and published thoughtful diversity declarations, added academic courses and offered faculty workshops on diversity and inclusion, created institutional structures such as DEI support centres, and made it easier for students to claim reasonable accommodations. Many have rebuilt their physical environment to universalize access and sought to broaden the diversity of their student body through targeted recruitment strategies.

These DE&I policies are commendably trying to make Japanese universities places of inclusion, connection and community for students who have until now often been marginalized. More profoundly, these discourses of diversity seek to broaden definitions of what is and what should be accepted as normal – that is, to confront prevailing assumptions of what a ‘normal’ Japanese university student is.

This presentation provides a concise overview of DE&I policies at major Japanese universities, illustrating their confluence with broader cultural and social trends.