

University of Arts in Belgrade
Interdisciplinary MA studies
Department for Management in Culture and Cultural Policy on the Balkans

Title of the MA Thesis:

**Presence of Japanese Culture on Serbian Cultural Scene
Analysis of Key Factors in Cultural Cooperation**

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In the era of globalization when new technologies are making world smaller, interaction between cultures is bigger than ever. Influences they have on one another and the frictions among them are increasing. We might say that the world's progress is created under the hub of western developed societies and demands of market economies. Countries and nations are faced with the challenge of readjusting or reaffirming their position on the world map, were besides successful economy, role of culture is crucial.

The phenomena of Japan and its successful reaffirmation both in economical and cultural aspect is generally known. Fascination of the West with Japanese culture is undeniable and taking bigger sway. The reason for that lies certainly in remarkable economic growth after the defeat and complete collapse of Japan after the WWII. The wisdom of Japan is that they quickly understood that accepting imposed western model of development is inevitable, but as many times before in their history, they used this model as a tool to recreate their own cultural identity and not as an ultimate ideal model they should look upon. In not more than 20 years Japanese economy was recovered and the world witnessed the so called "Japanese economic bubble" in the 60es. One social change brought about by the high-speed growth was the rise of the "salary man" society. During this period much of Japan's rural population migrated to the cities, urbanization was so rapid that urban population quickly began to vastly outnumber the rural one. Until this time, traditional Japanese entertainment had been pretty much confined to urban areas. But the salaried workers who poured into the cities showed little interest in such pursuits. They were attracted to new kinds of music and cinema coming from United States or Europe, through which "new urban culture" was born. With the accent on the quick economic development, traditional culture was neglected and it seemed that for a while Japan plunged into the almost uncritical consuming of Western pop culture. Most salaried workers during that period shied away from traditional Japanese entertainment and culture for a reason: Japan's militaristic education system, which revered education and forbade entertainment, was strongly reflected in the traditional entertainment. At any point, the generation in Japan on whose backs much of the rapid economic growth had been built had little free time for cultural pursuits. But the succeeding generation, born in wealth and having increased leisure time, began to develop specific taste for expanded forms of culture and entertainment. Parallel with the appearance of the new generations

and emergence of new forms of culture, the instances in charge for cultural affairs both on national and local level became aware of neglecting and general indifference towards traditional Japanese culture and undertook measures to do something about it. In the late 60es Agency for Cultural Affairs was established *and general shift in Japanese cultural policy was taking place*. Nevertheless, at the beginning of this reestablishment of national culture, a great gap existed between art the local governments were pushing and the aesthetic sense of general public. Here I have to mention that the dominant concept of culture in Japan until about the 80es was closely connected to the concept of Western art inherited from the Meiji era (1868- 1912). In other words, Japanese people associated the very word “culture” with Western classical music or art. In the 80es important shift takes place – culture in Japan starts to be understood in a much broader way, as something that makes our lives richer and more fruitful. Understanding that culture can be found in other places besides museums, concert halls and fine literature – for example in beautiful rows of stores or newly emerged cityscapes and new sensations they bring, suggests that the value judgments have changed. Interest in culture as a concept has deepened and expanded bringing fruits of what we perceive today as phenomena of contemporary Japanese culture.

At the beginning of 20 century Western world of arts discovered Japanese traditional arts and its aesthetic concepts finding a great inspiration in it. Once again, only this time in its own country, traditional art was rediscovered especially among younger generations of Japanese that went step further from consuming Western cultural products – they have increasingly seen traditional arts as fresh and stimulating, thus creating authentic and unique form of contemporary Japanese culture. This trend was also influencing industrial activities and by merging industrial activities with the specific cultural demands a world known phenomena of Japanese popular culture (J pop) was born. Unlike in the past, when Japan had the passive role towards outer world and its culture was consumed up to de measure and extent needed to satisfy the Western hunger for new stimulus and exoticism, for the first time in its history Japan is taking an active roll of carefully shaping the image of its own culture that is going to be presented to the world, taking it as powerful tool for strengthening its position as one of the leaders in the global development.

So I would say that Japan, after succeeding to achieve economic resurrection, managed to perform the cultural one, offering to the world not just top-quality new technology products but successfully “selling” its cultural products as well. Japanese realized the power of cultural industry so what once was almost marginal culture (manga, anime, otaku culture, world of kawaii...) became not just exquisite export product but also officially incorporated in the corpus of national culture promoted by relevant state institutions. This active roll that Japan is taking coincides with the constant hunger of Western culture for exoticism. Visiting any European capital one can easily notice how different cultural influences are embraced (music, food, fashion, lifestyle) – surely, only up to an extent where these influences are widening the choice and giving richer flavor to comfortable culture of consumerism. They are just absorbed into great Western culture, not placed at the same level. What West needs is “safe exoticism”. I dare say that that is exactly what Japan is providing and that is the important key of success Japanese culture on the West. Today’s Japan has a deceptively Western appearance: institutions, banking system, education and even parliamentary government. Nevertheless, all of this grew on completely different ethic and aesthetic concepts, so the first-glance similarity looks drastically different beneath the surface. If I may simplify it – the package is adjusted to fit the standards of the Western society, but the content is drastically different and exactly this discrepancy makes Japan all the more baffling to outsiders.

My motivation to deal with representation of Japanese culture in the world and subsequently, here in Serbia has two reasons – my professional background as Japanese scholar and presently working on cultural cooperation between Serbia and Japan resulted in a wish to gather, analyze and put in one place insofar presence of Japanese culture on Serbian cultural scene, that truly speaking is far from intensive, but bigger than wide public knows. The other motive, besides professional, is personal gratitude to the people of Japan that is showing friendship and understanding for our country very actively, by delivering extended economic assistance during past 10 years. Most of the material and information on Japan one can find here is nourishing the stereotyped image of Japan as country of Samurai, Geisha and cherry blossoms. The most important books on Japan have been written, compiled or translated in 60es and 70es, like works on Japan’s economic growth by Dr. Dzermal Hatibovic or works introducing Japanese philosophy

and religion by Dr Dejan Razic and Dr Dusan Pajin. What I would like to do is to give a new stimulus to young scholars interested in this subject to deal with contemporary Japanese culture. I would examine it through institutional framework of Japanese culture – its cultural diplomacy and cultural policy mechanisms on the global level, giving examples of America and France and to show how it looks like in practice in the case of Serbia.

Thesis would have four chapters as follows:

- I** Image of the Japan in the world today – hype about Japanese culture
- II** Cultural stereotypes – friendly enemies: the most common stereotypes regarding Japanese culture
- III** Institutional framework and cultural policies in Japan that are shaping national image and cultural promotion

IV Presence of Japanese culture on Serbian cultural scene – analysis of the key factors
Although these chapters are to represent backbone of the structure of the theses, in the process of writing thesis there might come to the change of titles and sequence, and more detailed structure organized in subchapters is will be created after gathering majority of raw material.

Subject of Research

In the *theoretical part* (chapters I and II) I would try to give the answer on the question *what is behind vast popularity of Japanese culture and how Japan, by the means of cultural policy and management tools, managed not just to significantly improve the image of its country but also to become one of trendsetters in contemporary global culture*. Important part of the present image Japan has is also due to a number of *cultural stereotypes* that is surrounded with and I'd like to show how they were seen and interpreted in important historical periods and how the same ones were shifted from “black to white”. More important is to pose the question are Japanese aware of these stereotypes and how are they dealing with them. Also, how much these stereotypes influenced creation of Japanese current cultural policy.

It the *practical part* (chapters III and IV), *the research will focus on the main currencies of Japanese cultural policy, mechanisms of its implementation and its manifestations in*

Serbia. For me personally it is interesting to see how all this global currencies are reflected here, since at least in the context of Japan, Serbia is marginal target field, but far from being neglected. So the main subject is *how and by which means is Japanese culture represented in Serbia*. Therefore, I would like to question the insofar actors and channels that gave framework for Japanese culture to enter Serbian cultural space, to see which aspects of it are most present, is the offer corresponding to the existing interest of the local public towards Japanese culture.

Aims

While I'm writing this proposal, I have in mind that I would like to address people who have background in cultural management and policy but have not previously encountered in their work with Japanese culture or Japanese partners. Therefore, my goal is first of all to introduce and explain genesis of the phenomena of contemporary Japanese culture in a comprehensive and systematic way to a reader that, for example wants to establish cultural cooperation with Japan or realize a project with Japanese partner. Theoretical part of the thesis could be useful also to non-Serbian audience, but second part is aimed at Serbian cultural workers that are or interested in this subject or already intentions to start or improve their cooperation with Japan. By identifying main actors that are dealing with Japanese culture in Serbia and their methods of work I would like to see if there is a room for improvement of this cooperation and to give some suggestions how it could be done. My aim is to identify possibilities and weak points in the current state of arts and to suggest possible ways to overcome them and achieve more successful cultural cooperation.

Methodology

First I would need to outline historical socio-political context of Japanese society with the accent on it's interaction to the outer world and the way the views from both sides changed depending on current geo-political situation. *In order to try to get the answer posed in theoretical part, I will contrast important studies (list of reference books below) on Japanese culture done in the post war period and contemporary ones*. For example, one done by American cultural anthropologist Ruth Benedict "Chrysanthemum and the

Sword” immediately after WWI that influenced strongly view on Japan at that time and analysis from the late 90es done by Hayashi Chikio and Kuroda Yasumasa in their “Japanese Culture in Comparative Perspective”; Both of them deal with historical facts and cultural stereotypes, but viewed from two different, once opposed, sides and distance of 50 years between two publications. *How these theories are reflected in official institutions whose job is to create and streamline image of Japan towards the outer world I will try to show by analyzing institutional framework in Japan that is facilitating dissemination of cultural products. As there are no previous studies in Serbia on this subject, I find very important to describe structure, way of work, goals and methods of the following key institutions:*

MOFA (Ministry of Foreign Affairs (外務省 *Gaimushō*)), MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (文部科学省 *Monbu-kagakushō*)), Agency for Cultural Affairs (文化庁 *bunkachō*) as a special body of the Japanese Ministry of Education (MEXT), Japan Foundation and numerous private foundations that foster cultural exchange. Through their activities I would analyze main currencies of Japanese foreign policy in the sphere of culture – its aims and corresponding strategies, introducing some examples from their cultural relations to France and USA. Surely, cultural influences are spreading, maybe even more powerful, by the means of internet, especially through networks or forums gathered around certain subject of interest. These channels are mostly out of institutional frameworks and are especially important on the territories that are not well covered by institutional channels, which is in the case of contemporary Japanese culture in Serbia exactly the case.

To analyze presence and promotion of Japanese culture in Serbia will require lots of field work, since there is none of studies or even overviews published on this subject. After identifying all the main factors involved I would try to gather data on the extent of activities performed in the aim of promotion of Japanese culture and based on these data construct a questionnaire and perform series of interviews. The main sources I have identified insofar are Department for cooperation with Asia within Serbian Ministry of foreign Affairs, Embassy of Japan in Serbia, Center for Asian studies founded by professor Ljiljana Markovic, around 20 friendship associations that function in different towns all around Serbia, publisher “Kokoro” that is by and large focused on publishing

works on Japanese philosophy and culture, NPO “Sakurabana”, dealing with promoting manga and anime culture in Serbia, NPO “Japan – Jugo Art Project” that is lead by Nobuko Akikawa, curator from Tokyo that is for years working on exchange of artists between Japan and Serbia and finally all cultural institutions that received financial grant from Japanese government. By analyzing their activities I would see which areas of Japanese culture they cover, do they keep up with the current trends and in which way they interpret and promote Japanese culture.

Big obstacle in working on this thesis will be limited material I can obtain, as well as the complexity and broadness of the subject itself. From the other hand, as nobody in Serbia has dealt with this subject before, the material I would present could serve as a good starting ground for the ones interested cultural cooperation with Japan, or doing some further research on the subject. Also, In the light of forthcoming Belgrade Book Fair and Japan as the honor guest, the subject of this thesis gets more on its importance.

Time Frame

Work on thesis will have four phases, within time frame of approximately 9 months.

Phase	1	2	3	4
Time frame	Nov07-Jan08	Feb08-Mar08	Apr08-May08	Jun08-Jul08
Activities	Identifying and gathering relevant theoretical material; Internet research and getting acquainted with the current streams of Japan’s international cultural policy and diplomacy; Identifying main actors in presentation of	Analysis of gathered theoretical material and writing the first chapters; gathering information and relevant material from the field; Constructing questionnaire and conducting interviews with representatives of Embassy and local	Analysis of the interviews and gathered field material and writing results of research; Organising text in chapters and sub-chapters;	Final work on thesis; preparing French summary and preparation for thesis defense and

	Japanese culture in Serbia	actors involved in the issue		
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