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It was exactly two decades ago. The first fascicle of *Silva Iaponicarum* was issued in September 2004. The Latin title of the new periodical was supplemented consciously and deliberately by its two-sinogram rebus writing subtitle constituent 日林, being the rough semantic counterpart of the main part of the title. The meanings of both alluded overtly, in a rather playful manner, to the interdisciplinary, broad view of Japanese studies proposed thus.

The editorial board consisted initially of four members (in alphabetic order of surnames): Arkadiusz Jabłoński, Maciej Kanert (who raised the initial idea of the periodical), Iwona Kordzińska-Nawrocka and Anna Zalewska. They were affiliated with two (of three existing at the time) academic centers of Japanese studies at the national universities in Poland, Poznań (Adam Mickiewicz University, AMU) and Warsaw (The University of Warsaw).

The original formula of the periodical, designed as a multi-lingual Japanese-English-Polish “new concept quarterly on Japanese studies”, was created soon after the unfortunate discontinuation of the Polish periodical *Japonica* in 2003. The unique idea of *Silva Iaponicarum* originated from the AMU Chair of Oriental Studies. The intention behind it was to provide a new and effective platform for scientific exchange and integration for all Japanese studies centers in Poland. From the beginning, also the postal address of the editorial board was associated with the AMU Chair of Oriental Studies. Still, it was rather due to the fact that the periodical was required to have an official postal address than with the intention of emphasizing the central role of AMU in the process of its creation. Successively, the representatives of Japanese studies affiliated with other Polish state universities were invited to join the editorial board, to include in the later course of events also the Kraków (Jagiellonian University) and (the most recently founded) Toruń (Nicolaus Copernicus University) centers.

Thinking about it today, in the third decade of the 21st century, we were fairly (perhaps: too much) brave and optimistic in the very beginning. There were not many scholars specializing in Japanese studies and ready to publish in the English or Japanese language. There were not many people capable of providing a native speaker’s check of English and Japanese articles (especially as volunteers). Last but not least, perhaps also the very idea of publishing, especially in foreign languages, was different from the way it is perceived nowadays. From this perspective, one may venture a conclusion

that *Silva Iaponicarum* paved the way for new trends in Japanese studies in Poland – and perhaps not only in Poland.

On the other hand, it is not to say that publishing in English – in some instances, in English only – solves all potential issues related to the quality of expert investigation. In a special sense, research may have citizenship. What we inherited after *Japonica* is the Polish language of translations from Japanese published in *Silva Iaponicarum*. After 20 years, there is still no medium in Poland that specializes in collecting, reviewing and publishing papers on Japanese studies exclusively in the Polish language at a professional level. While this was not the original mission and vision of our periodical, this issue is still open.

Japanese studies have been traditionally defined as focused on philology in its narrow sense, that is, on literature and linguistics. This is a fact that applies also to Oriental studies in a general perspective. While research papers belonging to these two areas were, are and will surely be still published in *Silva Iaponicarum*, its profile, as the mere title suggests, is open to various research areas related to Japan, Japanese culture, art, history, social studies, and covering things Japanese in general, extending also at least in some specific instances to research topics going beyond the humanities. This feature, manifested clearly in the content of past and present fascicles, along with the multi-language profile of the periodical, translated also to certain challenges related to effective procedures for reviewing papers accepted by the editorial board as well as for the overall evaluation of the periodical.

During the 20 years of its existence *Silva Iaponicarum* has been constantly changing. The initial significant challenge for the newly created quarterly, issued from the beginning both as hard copy, printed on paper, and in its electronic version, was to streamline the editing activities. This included, on a simultaneous basis, continuous collection of potential contributions, permanent recruitment of competent reviewers, and subsequent provision of stable funds for printing and distribution, the latter being only partly secured by the AMU Chair of Oriental Studies (for which the members of the editorial board would like to express their sincere gratitude). While this was surely not an easy beginning, it is now possible to state that, against all odds, despite delays and numerous issues related to pure logistics and technical matters as well as various other inexorable forces, the foundations of the new concept quarterly on Japanese studies as measured against the standards of a scientific journal have consequently been established.

The structure of the editorial board was flat from the start. At the end of 2007 I received an unofficial suggestion from Beata Bochorodycz, a fellow

member of the editorial board, to act as editor-in-chief, which I accepted. My intention was to allocate clearly the responsibility within the board rather than to develop my professional career in the publishing business. Still, it remains an important point and a vital area of my activity in my professional *curriculum vitae*. It is at the same time my obligation, honor and pleasure to express thanks for the continuous support from the many people involved in the activities of the board, as its members and as external advisers, who were not mentioned above, especially to (in alphabetical order): Adam Bednarczyk, Koichi Kuyama, Stanisław Meyer, and Aleksandra Szczechla. Special words of gratitude are due to Estera Żeromska, who actively and officially supported the idea of the periodical as the head of the AMU Chair of Oriental Studies (currently: AMU Institute of Oriental Studies).

Through the years, I have (inevitably) become the one to promote and observe the process of implementing the electronic-only version of *Silva*, along with introducing DOI for all papers published in the periodical and ORCID for their authors. All those concepts and research devices were fairly new at the time. Ironically, in the long run, it is perhaps the technical and logistics-related innovations that proved more successful than the actual integration of Polish scholars on Japanese studies under one label of *Silva Iaponicarum*. Instead, the multi-language format of the periodical was simply copied by another new periodical, in the likeness and image of *Silva*. This shows that proliferation is more powerful than unification, which may be a valuable observation on the grounds of human history and perhaps even of genetics. On the other hand, this mere fact also seems to prove, in reverse, that the multi-language format of *Silva Iaponicarum* is well-defined and necessary for the purposes of effectively exchanging ideas between the experts in Japanese studies in Poland and abroad.

Accordingly, it is significant to observe that the external voices of criticism towards the periodical that emerged throughout the process of its creation and development were in a characteristic manner focused primarily – if not solely – on technical, that is, non-essential issues. They were aimed mainly at the self-made logo that has been preserved to this day with almost no modification and to the cover page of the fascicle that has also remained mostly intact through two decades. As a side remark, it has always been my personal opinion – and the opinion of the editorial board members, as far as I am concerned – that while logos and desktop publishing details are definitely not fundamental brand name marks of a periodical, they remain crucial for its visual recognition. Perhaps the only significant difference to be experienced immediately is that the original background of the hard copy version of the fascicle was – for utterly secondary and accidental reasons –

yellow. Nevertheless, while *Silva Iaponicarum* is, by its very definition, a work in progress, neither perfect nor complete, the direction it has been heading seems right.

From 2020, the new editorial board of *Silva* is on duty, under the new editor-in-chief, Aleksandra Jarosz. I had a personal conversation with her at a time in which I suggested that she could probably be the one to take over the responsibility for the future fate of the periodical and I was very happy when she accepted my proposition.

And now everything is turning different again. New decisions are being made and subsequent changes are underway. It is good to have successors. And it is probably even better not to interfere – an opportunity of which I am surely planning to take advantage. Much can be expected, indeed. Not in terms of competition or ranking, however. The mission to provide an alternative viewpoint on various phenomena from the perspective of Polish and European scholars in Japanese studies still requires a lot to be done, in both administrative and scientific terms. I am happy to have had the chance to contribute in person, as much as I was able to, to this undertaking. And I am grateful to all who helped – and to all who are still helping – to improve and to promote *Silva Iaponicarum* as a better periodical on Japanese studies.

Poznań-Karczewko, September 2024