



Title	Globalizing Global Japanese Studies : Interests, Expectations, and Expertise
Author(s)	Lambrecht, Nicholas
Citation	越境文化研究イニシアティヴ論集. 2020, 3, p. 91-103
Version Type	VoR
URL	https://hdl.handle.net/11094/75564
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Globalizing Global Japanese Studies: Interests, Expectations, and Expertise

NICHOLAS LAMBRECHT*

1 Introduction

Global interconnectedness is dominating news headlines once again, this time due to the crisis caused by the worldwide coronavirus pandemic. The scale of the disaster is only now becoming clear, and we can't un-globalize even in the face of COVID-19, but how we choose to globalize remains a pressing question. Academic collaborations and opportunities for students to study abroad are falling by the wayside as countries close their borders to travel. How can a global studies program adapt to such changes? Here, I will reflect upon the changing academic environment and the prospects of the English-medium Global Japanese Studies program where I teach, as well as the promise and problems inherent in global studies programs. In more ordinary times I might start such an essay by considering what I have learned from my students this year. Around half of my students are from Japan, and the others are from around the world: South Korea, China, Brazil, Germany, Vietnam, the Philippines, the United States, France, Italy, and beyond. By bringing together people from this wide range of backgrounds, our program in Global Japanese Studies at Osaka University prompts all of us to review and reconsider our preconceptions about what it means to study Japan. I did learn a great deal from the students who studied with me this year.

Alternatively, I might begin with a discussion of how to interpret a meeting that was organized by the Consortium for Global Japanese Studies and convened at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in December 2019, the two-day Conference on Academic Exchange in the Pacific Rim. The first part of this conference focused upon how Japanese universities have attempted, and are still attempting, to globalize their research programs to meet the shifting needs of the academic marketplace, while the second invited foreign scholars to discuss the state of the field of Japanese Studies in the countries where they work. A difference in tone between these two sets of presentations was palpable, and yet, again, the very act of assembling this diverse group of academics for a conference on the state of Japanese Studies is undeniably a step toward creating something new out of the broad range of perspectives on the field.

* Assistant Professor of Global Japanese Studies, Graduate School of Letters, Osaka University.

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However, I would like to start thinking about the global by relating a more personal anecdote. On February 29, 2020, the Junkudō bookstore on Shijō Street in downtown Kyoto closed after 32 years in business. I believe it was the first bookstore I ever visited in Japan, over fifteen years ago when I spoke almost no Japanese and read even less. On Junkudō's final afternoon I bought a book as a last keepsake, and because it's in my neighborhood, I happened to be passing by again that night after the store was scheduled to have closed. But it was still full of people, and by the time the last customers left an hour later, a crowd of about three hundred onlookers was gathered outside to hear the final speech of the store manager. A video crew from Sankei News was also on the scene to cover the event; the closing was covered in local and national newspapers including the *Kyōto Shimbun* and *Asahi Shimbun*.¹

By this time the coronavirus outbreak had become a major issue in Japan, and primary and secondary schools nationwide had just been closed to quell its spread. The crowd was in masks to protect against the virus, reminding me of a recent class session in which my students debated the psychology, science, and manners of the tendency in Japan to use surgical masks as a preventive measure. Despite the government's advice to avoid assembling in large groups, the crowd stayed by the door, looking at the books inside as the shop was shut down. I was part of this crowd, not simply an observer of it; researching Japanese Studies while living in Japan necessitates involvement in the object of study, and of course I participated because I was feeling nostalgic too. Yet what struck me most at the time was that everyone was standing by that doorway out of respect for what the bookstore represented. Perhaps it was a foolhardy gesture given the circumstances, and perhaps many in the crowd were more interested in weekly magazines or study guides than in Japanese literature or history, but it was clear that the store was held in high esteem as a purveyor of knowledge.

In this sort of situation, the question that seems to arise most often among those just beginning to study about Japan is whether something like this should be considered a uniquely "Japanese" phenomenon. But my intention here is not at all to contemplate a particularly "Japanese" version of respect; I have been gratified to note that even students who join my classes out of an expressed desire to learn how to explain remarkable aspects of Japanese culture to foreigners generally come to reject simplistic ideas about an intrinsic cultural character when they are exposed to anything from the 1940s work of Ruth Benedict to the discourse on Japaneseness that spread during the bubble period. Instead

¹ See Yamazaki Satoshi 山崎聰, "Junkudō Kyōtoten Nigatsu-matsu ni Heiten: Kankōchi-ka ga Eikyō" ジュンク堂京都店が2月末に閉店 観光地化が影響, *Asahi Shimbun* 朝日新聞, 20 February 2020 and the unsigned "Ōgata shoten 'Junkudo' Kyōto to Nagoya no Niten Dōji Heiten: Nigatsu-matsu ni" 大型書店「ジュンク堂」京都と名古屋の2店同時閉店 2月末に, *Kyōto Shimbun* 京都新聞, 12 January 2020.

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I see the gathering of this crowd as an indication that anti-intellectualism is not in force everywhere around the world, despite the fact that the Junkudō bookstore was unable to survive on Shijō Street.

Similarly, there is still hope for higher education in the humanities to have a positive effect around the world, despite the well-publicized cuts to humanities education taking place both in Japan and globally.² There are reasons to be optimistic that the pursuit of Global Japanese Studies is a worthwhile endeavor on its own merits, not only an attempt to capitalize on watchwords in education that can still attract resources. This essay reflects my own investment in the field. Yet in order for Global Japanese Studies to fulfill its potential, we should first maintain high expectations for it.

2 Expectations

In any attempt to “globalize” domestic research, there must be a sustained focus on what will best serve the needs of students at both advanced and introductory levels. Within any educational system encouraging and nurturing linguistic versatility is an important component of this, but far from the only one. Students must also become comfortable working in a variety of classroom settings beyond the lecture pattern. In Japan, facilitating direct engagement between students and with professors through open discussion and dialogue is particularly vital. At the risk of overgeneralization, students at Japanese universities often need additional encouragement in order to become willing to share their own opinions rather than deferring to their professors.

In the case of Global Japanese Studies, there is also a clear need to bring students together to endure rigorous theoretical training in the form of a unified proseminar.³ In my own postgraduate program in East Asian Languages and Civilizations, this training was offered through a course called “A Young Person’s Guide to East Asian Humanities at the University of Chicago.” Though we resented the name, the content was crucial to our studies. We became aware of gaps in our knowledge and became versed in the shared vocabulary of the field. The course also gave us the opportunity to become familiar with the other members of our cohort, even if we were working on disparate topics. Beyond the proseminal, the program’s requirements to take courses about China

² Students in my courses this year reviewed these trends and explained their own reasons for continuing to pursue an education in the humanities in the context of looking back at the 2015 calls for educational reform described in Jeff Kingston’s article “Japanese University Humanities and Social Sciences Programs Under Attack,” *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, vol. 13, no. 39:1, 28 September 2015. For further discussion of the implications of the trend away from humanities education, see Yoshimi Shunya 吉見俊哉, “*Bunkei Gakubu Haishi*” no *Shōgeki* 「文系学部廃止」の衝撃, Shūeisha Shinsho 集英社新書, 2016.

³ This is true not only in the case of Global Japanese Studies programs, but of other programs as well. Too often a core curriculum is sacrificed in favor of additional courses on a professor’s specific area of expertise.

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and Korea as well as Japan—and to spend at least two years studying a second Asian language—were responsible for most of my working knowledge on other regions of East Asia, and I continued to interact with students engaged in research on other regions because of these courses. We then became important resources for one another when it was necessary to work on specialized topics or to use materials written in another foreign language.

Because the Global Japanese Studies program at Osaka University in which I currently teach is a “graduate minor” offered in addition to a main course of postgraduate study, it may be difficult to promote the sort of ties to a cohort that exist in many graduate seminars. However, the subordinate nature of the program should also create opportunities for greater flexibility when there are improvements to be made that would benefit all participants. Adding an introductory proseminar on Japanese Studies, in English or in Japanese or both, is one change that should allow the program to establish a uniform level of rigor across the “graduate minor” track. Exposing all students to the same introductory course would also encourage investment in the program of study, persuading more students to continue the program to completion.

Compared with many global studies programs in Japan, the graduate minor program at Osaka University is more amenable to granting credit for participation in courses conducted in Japanese. Overall this has a positive influence on the program, particularly because it promotes greater versatility on the part of exchange students who take such courses. At the same time, I find that it would be helpful to give further support to students who are interested in taking additional classes conducted in non-Japanese languages including English. Currently students are unable to receive additional program credit for taking courses conducted in English once they have completed the basic allotment of foreign language courses, which discourages students from making a sustained effort to attend these sorts of classes. It would be counterproductive to draw students away from investing sufficient effort in their primary field of study, but it seems likely that a more balanced approach to counting foreign language courses as “normal” would be valuable for many students.

Finally, the level of coursework taken in the foreign language should be standardized as much as possible. It is preferable to make the program accessible to a large number of students, so it is necessary to incorporate a selection of courses that do not demand advanced foreign language ability. Nevertheless, students should not be able to rely upon taking only the easiest level of courses offered in the foreign language medium. Students should be required to take at least one very advanced course in a foreign language, if only to gain a better perspective on the sorts of speech, register, and idiom that are employed in such courses.

Here I have focused upon possible refinement of the expectations for students participating in

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a specific Global Japanese Studies program. Scholars involved in organizing such programs tend to have a different set of expectations for the (often non-Japanese) scholars teaching in them, and I will return to a discussion of these in the final section of this essay. Yet because participation in the Global Japanese Studies “graduate minor” remains voluntary, and undergraduates also have the option to avoid such elective courses, the range of motivations that drives students to invest their time in Global Japanese Studies is also an important subject. Therefore, I turn next to an exploration of interest in Japan as a topic of study.

3 Does It Matter Whether Japan Is Interesting?

This question seems somewhat polemical. However, it is no more polemical than the many articles on whether or not “Japan is interesting” that have been published by prominent scholars. In my courses in the Global Japanese Studies program, we consider why Japan might be treated as an “interesting” topic of study from a variety of perspectives, relying in particular upon Masao Miyoshi’s essay “Japan Is Not Interesting,”⁴ Karatani Kōjin’s lecture “Japan Is Interesting Because Japan Is Not Interesting,”⁵ and the much more recent piece by John Whittier Treat, “Japan Is Interesting: Modern Japanese Literary Studies Today.”⁶ These pieces also speak to what, beyond being conducted in foreign languages, can help make Global Japanese Studies courses more “global.”

Miyoshi’s “Japan Is Not Interesting,” based upon a speech delivered at Amherst College in 1996, can be read either as a diagnosis of what ails Japanese society or as a call to action. To his American audience expecting to hear an expert’s perspective on Japan, Miyoshi presents a picture of a Japan that is uninteresting domestically because it has become disconcertingly univocal, a place that “discourages dissent and protest” despite the alienation experienced by large segments of society.⁷ This can be understood as a rejoinder to the West’s contemporary image of Japan as a place where the future and technology were being actively embraced. Of Japan’s international relationships, Miyoshi writes, “What is vitally problematic about Japan at the end of the twentieth century is its inability to understand the nature of its isolation from the rest of Asia, the Pacific, the

⁴ Masao Miyoshi, “Japan Is Not Interesting,” in Eric Cazdyn ed., *Trespasses: Selected Writings*, Duke University Press, 2010, pp. 189–204.

⁵ Karatani Kōjin, “Japan Is Interesting Because Japan Is Not Interesting,” unpublished lecture, March 1997.

⁶ John Whittier Treat, “Japan Is Interesting: Modern Japanese Literary Studies Today,” *Japan Forum*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2018, pp. 421–440.

⁷ Miyoshi, op. cit., p. 190; on pp. 191–194, Miyoshi identifies several of these alienated groups, including “writers, corporate executives, a professor, editors, the homeless, day laborers, and women,” each of which has described Japan as “uninteresting.”

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Americas, Europe, and the world.”⁸ Thus the lack of vibrant discourse in Japan is portrayed as a fundamental source of Japan’s apparent inability to globalize.

Reading this piece in Japan today seems to suggest something quite different to my students. Even in the aftermath of the prominent protest movements that arose in the 2010s, including the post-3/11 protests and the significant coverage of SEALDs, they recognize the same barriers to expressing dissent that Miyoshi noted more than two decades ago. Miyoshi expected his American audience to find it surprising that “Japan is not interesting,” but for students in Japan today the statement appears to ring true. They find that dissent is discouraged at an institutional level, if not absent at an individual one. In fact, in my classes there have been more objections to Miyoshi’s argument that “Japanese scholarship in the humanities and its journalism have consistently failed to play a significant role in the world context”⁹ than to the idea that “Japan is not interesting.” It is possible that students’ belief that Japanese scholarship is at the forefront of worldwide academia is due precisely to insufficient exposure to scholarship from “a world context,” or what is known in Japan (but again, only in Japan) as “Galapagos syndrome.” In either event, providing access to this background is an important task of Global Japanese Studies programs.

Karatani Kōjin takes a somewhat different approach in “Japan Is Interesting Because Japan Is Not Interesting,” a lecture presented in 1997 as a sort of response to Miyoshi’s talk. Like Miyoshi, Karatani argues, “It is true that there is nothing interesting now in Japan. [...] Japan is not interesting. I am sorry to say this to American Japanologists, but there is no future in the study of Japan.”¹⁰ However, Karatani views the problem of Japan’s “interesting” aspects through a very different lens. Because Karatani does not see Japanese society as unique, but rather as determined in essential ways by complete systematization and the supremacy of capitalism, he believes that Japanese society and history can serve as a case study for interpreting societies, history, and capitalism around the world. In other words, as he has made clear in later work, Karatani’s interest lies in looking at the Japanese present only in terms of what it is able to say about “the structure of world history.”¹¹ To Karatani, studying Japan is considered useful only to the extent that the results of research on Japan are immediately applicable to conditions occurring outside Japanese borders. Countering Miyoshi’s point on the insignificance of Japanese scholarship, Karatani invokes the work of Japanese thinkers like

⁸ Ibid., p. 201.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Karatani, op. cit.

¹¹ See Karatani Kōjin, *The Structure of World History: From Modes of Production to Modes of Exchange*, Michael Bourdagh trans., Duke University Press, 2014. The Japanese version is Karatani Kōjin 柄谷行人, *Sekaishi no Kōzō* 世界史の構造, Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, 2010.

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Uno Kōzō and Haniya Yutaka, whom he believes deserve reevaluation because their work could have applications on a worldwide scale.¹²

Students in the Global Japanese Studies program often seem unconvinced by the finer points of Karatani's argument related to totalitarianism and Marxism, but this idea of a representative Japan is compelling. While Karatani agrees with Miyoshi that "Japan is not interesting," he presents a way to rationalize preexisting interest in Japan as practical. Thus Karatani's argument functions as a defense of Global Japanese Studies—or, perhaps, as an argument in favor of "Japanese Global Studies."

Finally, I present students with Treat's 2018 essay "Japan Is Interesting." Though he does not mention Miyoshi and Karatani's essays directly, Treat clearly draws upon them. As implied by the title, Treat has a decidedly more optimistic take on the state of Japanese Studies in the English-speaking world. He believes that developments like the rise of the "new" genre of the cell phone novel, the propagation of other digital media, and the prominence of Japanese popular culture around the world all lend themselves to the renewal of Japanese Studies programs. For students with an interest in Global Japanese Studies, this may at first seem a welcome departure from the pessimistic arguments of Miyoshi and Karatani.

However, there are significant limitations to Treat's analysis.¹³ When Treat writes that "for those of us who work on Japanese literature, times are good," this appears to be more representative of his own privileged—though no doubt well-deserved—status as a tenured Yale professor than of the state of Japanese Studies as a field. Treat also bemoans how "young professors of Japanese literature [...] take great pains to be 'relevant'" at the same time he notes that "sometimes our colleagues in Japanese literary studies find themselves reduced to teaching how to roll *maki-zushi*" in order to maintain their jobs.¹⁴ These statements deliver a mixed message to graduate students attempting to prepare for careers in the humanities. Treat also quotes an anonymous "young PhD" who claims, "It continues to appear that 'World XYZ' in the Humanities is a strategy for disciplining labor, not any kind of scholarly approach, framework, or method."¹⁵ Here it is hard to

¹² This mirrors the way Karatani himself was spoken of in the 1990s as a thinker who, because he was being translated into English, was finally able to represent Japan directly to the English-speaking world. This was seen as a departure from the earlier explanations of Japan mediated by Western scholars. See, for example, Norma Field, "'The Way of the World': Japanese Literary Studies in the Postwar United States," in Helen Hardacre ed., *The Postwar Development of Japanese Studies in the United States*, Brill, 1998, pp. 260–267.

¹³ In one instance Treat recycles Karatani's comparison of postmodernist discourse to the 1940s discourse on overcoming modernity, a point that was made in "Japan Is Interesting Because Japan Is Not Interesting," without citing Karatani, then uses the idea that the two were similar to criticize none other than Karatani. In another instance he misinterprets the implications of several digital humanities studies, conflating attempts to construct algorithms with unquestioning faith in their output. See Treat, op. cit., p. 425 and pp. 433–435.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 423–424.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 431.

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find fault in the statement itself, insofar as administrators must fulfill directives that may conflict with the goals of academics; “World XYZ” (cf. “Global Japanese Studies”) may certainly be an easier formula to promote than many alternatives. At the same time, we must recognize that it is incumbent upon us as scholars and researchers to search for productive approaches and methods that fit our given set of circumstances. Surely it is preferable for scholars to develop these approaches themselves, rather than receiving prescribed methods in the form of mandates.

In the end, my students tended to focus upon their sense that Treat sees himself as an observer of Japan, rather than a participant. From my perspective—having been affiliated with Japanese Studies departments in both the American and Japanese university systems—this also helps explain why Treat argues that whereas English departments “brought some of their institutional troubles onto themselves,” Japanese Studies scholars “find ourselves reacting to changes in the intellectual and pedagogic terrain we are not responsible for but which we nonetheless have to address.”¹⁶ This sort of statement appears to indicate a troubling refusal to acknowledge culpability for the well-known shortcomings of Cold War-era area studies, or how the area studies frameworks of that time continue to influence area studies programs today. My students proffered, making reference to both Treat and Miyoshi, that the extent of a sense of responsibility toward a topic of study may be inversely correlated with an ability to claim that it the topic is “interesting.”

With this in mind, it must be recognized that whether one feels personal interest in Japan is “academic” in both senses of the term. The question of whether or not Japan is interesting is quite similar to the question of whether the humanities are important. Of course there are aspects of Japan that can be called interesting, and of course the humanities are essential. But when scholars are forced to defend the humanities (including the study of Japan) in quantifiable terms, much of the battle has already been lost.

If the question of whether Japan is interesting were simply irrelevant to Global Japanese Studies, it might seem unnecessary to draw focus to it. Why, then, do I cover these topics in my Global Japanese Studies courses? The simplest answer is that drawing focus toward the “interest” involved in studying Japan is a strategy that helps us avoid expending too much time and effort on attempts to define the object of study, “Japan.” Not only are attempts to define “Japan” futile, but they also necessitate an emphasis on difference and exclusion that is contrary to many of the goals of a global studies program. Ideally, students should receive sufficient training regarding the existing discourse on “Japan” in their introductory proseminar, while a secondary focus of other courses in the program becomes searching for “interesting” aspects of the established discipline of

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 423.

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Japanese Studies that would benefit from being reconsidered in a global context. Usually this involves generalizing the Japanese case in a way that subverts entrenched notions of Japanese uniqueness, a project that Karatani might welcome. Sometimes it entails reestablishing the importance of listening to marginalized voices, as Miyoshi did in “Japan Is Not Interesting.” And I would not care to take issue with Treat’s claim that Japan is interesting, either. Interest can be a precursor to deeper understanding.

This is a point I try to emphasize to my students, some of whom initially believe that it is not important for them to study outside of their own specialization. Since this view seems to be more widely held at universities in Japan than in the United States, the perspective may derive from the fact that students are forced to choose a field of study immediately upon entry to an undergraduate program. Encouraging students to take an interest in, or experiment with, a wide range of topics is one of the essential goals of the introductory proseminar. However, I also hope that students will come to recognize that treating all topics *as though* they are interesting—meeting them on their own terms and attempting to explore them systematically—is a mindset that is essential for all scholars. Refreshing one’s frame of mind by learning about fields of study that initially seem unrelated is one of the best ways to gain new insight, and this fact is also one of the best arguments against attempts to declare only certain fields worthwhile.¹⁷

Accordingly, it is only of secondary importance whether or not Japan should be considered inherently or particularly interesting. What is essential is the will to treat all topics, including those related to Japan, as possibly relevant to some new problem that will arise in the future. Conversely, it is only by employing a broad, global perspective on “Japan” that new approaches to unanswered questions about Japan will present themselves. The ability to maintain interest in a wide variety of “global” topics is an important skill that can be developed and strengthened through practice, and this is a skill that must be nurtured by any Global Japanese Studies program.

4 Insight and Expertise

The purpose of courses conducted within a Global Japanese Studies program, then, is to build a meaningful network of “global” knowledge. Over time, as these networks of knowledge are

¹⁷ In this vein, I now recommend that students who express active disinterest in a particular topic refer to Sakai Satoshi 酒井敏, *Kyōdai-teki Aho ga Naze Hitsuyō ka: Kaosu na Sekai no Seizō Senryaku* 京大的アホがなぜ必要か—カオスな世界の生存戦略, Shūeisha Shinsho 集英社新書, 2019. Sakai is particularly clear on the point that the usefulness of information obtained now may only become useful later, as networks of knowledge are established.

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constructed, the connections between related phenomena in different fields become clearer. The goal is to procure a vantage point that results in forms of insight¹⁸ that are translatable to both university teaching and research. As has been recognized by scholars from member institutions of the Consortium for Global Japanese Studies—some of the academics who are most involved in thinking through how to construct and organize Global Japanese Studies programs in Japan—there are two principal ways to go about this: on an individual level, and on an institutional level. These two approaches are reflected in the perspectives of Ushimura Kei¹⁹ and Unoda Shōya.²⁰

Ushimura advocates the further integration of critical theory into Japanese Studies, an approach that is similar to the type of education he has seen employed at foreign institutions like the University of Chicago. Ushimura glosses this as “Japanese studies in global (and comparative) perspectives” in English.²¹ The approach recognizes that most foreign students begin their studies with only very vague ideas about Japan, so a theoretical background serves as a foundation for analyzing particular information about Japan that is accumulated over the course of study. What is being considered global here is the attempt to tackle the subject of Japanese Studies from the side of theory. Whether this is considered a foreign undertaking or not, as I have argued above, there is nothing irreproducible about this approach in the context of a Global Japanese Studies program; the most difficult part may simply be convincing students to participate.

While this comparative perspective is clearly useful when teaching, Ushimura draws another essential distinction between “Japan generalists” and “Japan specialists.”²² A typical Japan generalist might be characterized as a professor at a foreign institution whose courses must cover a wide range of topics related to Japan that would be considered unrelated fields in a Japanese university. This image of the “Japan generalist” is no doubt tied to Treat’s example of the scholar of Japanese literature reduced to teaching students how to roll sushi. Although it is possible to think of this role in a positive way, as a place to express the type of interest and insight described above,

¹⁸ Drawing upon network theory, Sakai describes this as a process in which different fields become more integrated at deeper points in the network, allowing for new paradigm shifts. See Sakai, *op. cit.*, pp. 126–131. In my view this must be considered insight rather than intuition, because it depends upon the active accumulation of a large amount of background information. Although I write here that the connections “become clear,” this can also be understood as a process of defamiliarization of the content of adjoining fields.

¹⁹ Ushimura Kei 牛村圭, “Japan Generalist no Kōzai” Japan Generalist の功罪, in Matsuda Toshihiko, Isomae Jun’ichi, Enomoto Wataru, Maekawa Shiori, and Yoshie Hirokazu eds. 松田利彦・磯前順一・榎本涉・前川志穂・吉江弘和編, *Naze Kokusai Nihon Kenkyū nano ka* なぜ国際日本研究なのか, Kōyō Shobō 晃洋書房, 2018, pp. 72–81.

²⁰ Unoda Shōya 宇野田尚哉, “‘Nihongaku’ no 30-nen: 1980-nendai to 2010-nendai no Aida” 「日本学」の30年—1980年代と2010年代のあいだ, in Matsuda et. al., *op. cit.*, pp. 50–57.

²¹ Ushimura, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 79–81.

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Ushimura is also uncompromising in insisting that professors be able to function as specialists in a particular field in order to make new advances in scholarship. It is clear that the ideal is to be able to function as both a “Japan generalist” and as a “Japan generalist,” but whether or not this is possible or practicable appears to be an open question to Ushimura.

To Unoda, meanwhile, the survival of Japanese Studies programs in Japan can only be assured through making the research performed in them influential on a more global level.²³ In some ways this is a more practical approach to the globalization of Japanese Studies, because it allows researchers to pool their existing strengths in specialized fields in order to create a single, balanced program. Of course, this is how most university departments are constructed when there is a critical mass of researchers. This option is open to large Global Japanese Studies programs in Japan, but as Ushimura implies, it is not available to most Japanese Studies programs abroad in which only a handful of scholars are responsible for teaching all classes about Asia, from history and religion to art and culture. This is not a flaw in Unoda’s approach, however. The isolated nature of foreign Japanese Studies programs makes scholars overseas all the more open to collaboration, and by promoting such collaboration through Global Japanese Studies programs, such programs in Japan can draw upon both the generalist insight and the specialization of a larger number of researchers.

Thus Unoda aims to achieve greater internationalization through the method of networking, whereas Ushimura seeks internationalization primarily through individual engagement in comparative studies. Within a domestic Global Japanese Studies program, I have pointed to both networking and comparative studies as objectives that can be achieved via the required proseminar, but here both Ushimura and Unoda are also focused on how established researchers function in global contexts. The two approaches can both be understood as strategies meant to develop insight; while Ushimura is interested in the insight of individuals exposed to a variety of circumstances, Unoda is interested in the insight made possible by groups made up of members that pool a variety of experiences. This also explains why Ushimura is drawn to the inherent divide between teaching as a generalist and researching as a specialist, because while Ushimura favors the scholarship of the specialist, generalist insight is the product of flexibility and a knowledge of theory.

Yet while this may hold true for Japanese researchers, it appears that foreign researchers are generally expected to show less potential. Ushimura raises the example of two British “experts,” one involved in research on Kajii Motojirō and the other on the Iwakura Mission. When these scholars gave presentations in Japan, their arguments were too simplistic, they read several *kanji*

²³ Unoda, op. cit., pp. 54–57. Unoda returns to the concept of “Galapagos syndrome” when describing the current state of domestic Japanese Studies.

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incorrectly, and quotations were cut off in strange places. The moderator is said to have praised the presentations too profusely, and Ushimura expresses a sense of regret that these scholars were not informed that their presentations were inadequate.²⁴

In the context of Ushimura's argument, I might first hazard a guess that these British scholars would not claim to be experts or specialists about the topics upon which they were presenting. Researchers based abroad seem much more willing to in-progress work than they are in Japan, and although this is only conjecture, the British scholars may not have fully apprehended that they were effectively labeling themselves experts by agreeing to present on these topics. Further, it is undeniable that the structure of Asian Studies programs overseas encourages the development of "Japan generalists" rather than specialists in a narrow subject area, so these researchers might not expect themselves to be called experts in anything. They may even have welcomed the type of criticism that Ushimura thinks they should have received.²⁵ Meanwhile, Ushimura does not present any examples of foreign researchers who have been more successful in Japan. The underlying point at stake here is whether foreign scholars can be expected to make significant contributions to the study of Japanese literature, history, or other fields in the humanities—that is, whether international researchers can or should have a permanent role in Global Japanese Studies in Japan. I firmly believe that the answer to this question is yes, on two counts.

First, there must be an expectation of competence applied to the work of foreign students and researchers. This means that when studies are not up to Japanese academic standards, they are both held to account and presented with constructive feedback that will allow them to place themselves within the existing discourse more naturally in future work. Respect should be given to the training that has occurred overseas and it should be understood that the sorts of skills acquired in this training are often quite different from the type of skills required to interact with the Japanese academic community. Thus, initial failure to meet specific Japanese academic standards does not necessarily reflect a lack of ability on the part of a foreign scholar. This may be frustrating to scholars who expect foreign ABDs or researchers with doctoral degrees to be fluent and conversant in their area of research, but an ABD student may have been expected to acquire the equivalent of ten to fifteen years of Japanese Studies training in just three to four years, and a foreign professor with a variety of "generalist" academic duties may not often be pressed to improve, for example, skill at public

²⁴ Ushimura, *op. cit.*, p. 80.

²⁵ As far as mistaken *kanji* readings are concerned, I am reminded of some criticisms of the writings of Harry Harootunian that have focused on his misreadings of terms in Japanese while allowing his basic arguments to go uncontested; whether reading a term incorrectly is necessarily symptomatic of inadequacy in other areas is an open question, and Japan certainly has higher expectations for precision and accuracy in the use of Japanese than we find expected of speakers of English.

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speaking in Japanese.

Second, it means that the research of foreign academics must be taken seriously, particularly when it comes to the theories and novel concepts underlying their work. New perspectives should be embraced. In some cases, what at first appears to be overly simplistic might be the result of a struggle to express fully formulated ideas, and the ability for researchers to interact in multiple languages can help remedy such issues. It is true that many other new perspectives may not prove to be productive avenues of study over time. Yet while the idea that Japanese scholarship can gain more influence at the global level if disseminated in English is certainly correct, it is insufficient to claim that, with few exceptions, the best scholarship on Japan comes from Japan.²⁶ On one hand, this attitude can be discouraging to exchange students who are pursuing an international education. On the other hand, such an understanding would appear to be grounded in privileging the specialist over the generalist. The global perspective needed in order to engage in Global Japanese Studies involves the ability to juxtapose, reorganize, and make connections that are not immediately obvious. It is only through this sort of study that the drawbacks to current methods and approaches can be made clear. In other words, it is not going too far to state that the most overspecialized research on Japan also comes from Japan.

I do not intend to portray myself as an ideal researcher on all of these counts. I am a junior scholar with relatively little experience in the Japanese academic world. It is natural that a researcher should be expected to exhibit the ability to adhere to established conventions before breaking them. However, it is precisely because it is difficult to advance professionally as a foreign researcher in Japan that I now find the undertaking worthwhile. Being held to a different set of high standards encourages growth, and growth is important not only for professional reasons, but also because it allows me as a professor to better serve the needs of my students. Of course, this applies to any educational program, not only one in Global Japanese Studies. Yet if it is Global Japanese Studies that best represents a door between the Japanese academic community and the world, then we must be willing to step through the door before it closes.

²⁶ See Unoda, *op. cit.*, pp. 54–55.