



VSJF Annual Conference 2010 (November 26-28 2010, Frankfurt/Main)

The next annual conference of the German Association for Social Science Research on Japan (VSJF) is scheduled for **November 26 to 28, 2010** at Goethe-University, Campus Westend (Casino) in Frankfurt / Main Germany with the subject **"Cultural Power Japan – Impact and Intellectual Dimensions"**.

"Cultural Power Japan – Impact and Intellectual Dimensions"

The global success of Japanese cultural products and the worldwide presence of "J-lifestyles" have become commonly known as the "Cool Japan"-phenomenon. The boom of the "big J" is a timely research topic of the international Japanese Studies community and has been discussed previously on conferences in Paris (2007), Berlin (2007 and 2008), Frankfurt (2008) and Tōkyō (2008 and 2009). Due to the manifold aspects of the cultural power concept the discussion is still ongoing. Furthermore the search for new meta-theories and a more detailed analysis of already existing theories on Japan's popular culture on a global level is still in demand.

The global boom of "J-culture" is frequently being connected to keywords such as "sublunary" and "polymorphous perversity" (Allison), which describe the character of Japanese pop industry products and the ways how they differ to Western entertainment culture. However, many approaches to Japanese popular culture, are dealing with the „non-Western“, even spiritual facets of the subject, but do not pursue the question of how this new "Japaneseness" of pop-cultural manifestations can be contextualized in the bigger framework of a Japanese identity discourse since the 1990s and how the political instrumentalization of subculture is discussed within the Japanese intellectual community. Some voices have welcomed Japan's change from previously being in a state of "self-denial" to the creation of a "Japanese odour" that valorises its products as „things Japanese“.

Others have denied the possibility of a Japanese identity after the (traumatizing) encounter with the West since 1945 (Azuma 2001). This raises the question if any Japanese philosophies are transported with the global Japanese hype or whether the boom has to be interpreted on a more general level of human existence in post-modern times. Especially with regard to the popular theory that assumes a Japanese national character of "techno-animism" and a "permanent" Japanese postmodernity a critical discussion is crucial. The multi-layered character and the diversity of terms such as „Cool Japan“, „J-lifestyle“, „J-Pop“ and „cultural power Japan“ make it difficult to focus the methodological approach. Even by limiting the topic on cultural products such as Manga and Anime, as some conferences have already done, the meaning of "cultural power Japan" remains ambiguous.

The conference aims to shed a new light on and extend the discussion of Japan's cultural power in the 21st century in three ways: First, by introducing comments and findings of Japanese critiques and cultural philosophers such as Ōtsuka Eiji, Azuma Hiroki and Miyadai Shinji. Second, by analysing possible influences of Japanese advertising companies, media producers and lifestyle-designers on global customers with a special focus on empirical data of Japan's impact on global youth. Third, to add another perspective to the global impact of Japan's cultural power the conference discusses the Japan hype in Western countries compared to the one occurring simultaneously in China and Southeast Asia.

Additionally a new approach to the subject is envisioned with the last panel of the conference on „Reading Manga, studying Japanese studies“. From a student perspective (students majoring in Japanese studies) the question of an influence of Japan on their field of study, lifestyles and career planning will be raised and discussed.

The central questions of the conference are:

- What are the different perspectives and insights in the discussion of Japan's cultural power and how do Japanese intellectuals position themselves towards the subject?
- What are the ideological and economical implications of the global hype of Japan's popular culture and to what extend are Manga and Anime helpful instruments of this "soft power"?
- Is there any empirical evidence of a measurable impact of Japan's popular culture on the global youth?
- How is the (new?) cultural power Japan viewed not only in the West but also by its direct Asian neighbours?

These questions will be addressed in four plenary sections on (for detailed information refer to the

preliminary program below):

- "Meta-theories and the discourse on Japan as a cultural power"
- "Past and present of Japanese cultural hegemonies as mirrored in popular culture in Southeast Asia and China"
- "Manga in Europe: empirical findings and their interpretation"
- "Reading Manga, studying Japanese Studies"

Participation in the conference requires **registration until October 31, 2010 latestly**, please refer to the registration form below. Please note, that we have only a limited allocation of the reduced student participation fee for the conference (40 student participants).

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[Conference Program](#)

[Registrationform](#)

[List of Hotels](#)

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