

Light and Darkness

Reflections on the Study of Japanese Literature in Germany

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Room L-821 (8F, Library), Sophia University Yotsuya Campus

In this lecture, the situation of the Study of Japanese Literature in Germany is highlighted against a number of topics: After a brief overview over its history since its beginnings in the late 19th century, we will look into what has engaged researchers and the younger generation of would-be scholars in their MA- and dissertation theses over the past decades in order to discover trends in topics and methodologies, asking which factors influenced their choice and led to discarding other approaches. We will also address the situation of 'Japanology' in the context of recent developments in the academe on a national and European as well as a global level. Which kinds of audiences does the study of Japanese literature address? Is there a scientific community at all? And if so, where can it be found? What is the relationship of Japanese literature studies to Kokubungaku, the study of 'national literature' in Japan? And what are other significant contexts which have to be considered? Will the study of Japanese literature in Germany (and perhaps other European regions) merge with a globalized anglophone scholarly discourse? And how can it maintain its relevance in a rapidly changing scholarly and cultural environment? These are some of the questions which arise in the context of this lecture and which will provide material for a perhaps controversial, but most certainly enlightening discussion.



Irmela Hijiya-Kirschner has been Professor of Japanology (Literature and Cultural Studies) at Freie Universität Berlin since 1991, and in November 2010 she became Director of the Friedrich Schlegel Graduate School of Literary Studies at Freie Universität. Prior to this, she was Associate Professor for Japanese Literature and the Sociology of Literature at Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo (1985/86), and Professor for Contemporary Japanese Studies at Trier University from 1986 to 1991. For eight years (1996-2004) she was Director of the German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ) in Tokyo.



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