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الجمعية الإسرائيلية لدراسة اليابان
Israeli Association for Japanese Studies

The Eighth Biennial International Conference of the Israeli Association for Japanese Studies

4-5 November 2026
Jerusalem, Israel

Program & Abstracts

Hosted by: Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design Jerusalem

Bezalel בצלאל بتسلئيل
Academy of Arts אקדמיה أكاديمية للفنون والتصميم and Design Jerusalem לאמנות ועיצוב ירושלים القدس

האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים
THE HEBREW UNIVERSITY OF JERUSALEM

JAPANFOUNDATION

Wednesday, 4 November

Venue:
Nathan Drahi Research and Innovation Center, 3F, Room 365

PROGRAM DAY 1

8:30-9:00 **Gathering and Registration**
Venue: Nathan Drahi Research and Innovation Center, 3rd Floor, Room 365.

9:00-9:30 **Greetings, Opening**
Erez Golani Solomon Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design Jerusalem. IAJS Chair
Arie Kutz Nir-Kutz Architects. IAJS President

In Memoriam
In memory of **Adlai Stock** Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design Jerusalem

9:30-11.30 **Panel 1**
CRAFTS AND THE FINE ARTS: BEYOND THE DIVISION OF GEIJUTSU INTO BIJUTSU (FINE ART) AND KŌGEI (CRAFT)
Chair: **Erez Golani Solomon** Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design Jerusalem
Discussant: **Oshrat Dotan** Tel Aviv University

- **Kazuko Kameda Madar** Tel Aviv University, and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
  From Kōgei to Mingei: Bamboo Basketry and the Changing Status of Craft in Modern Japan

- **Yael Harnik** University of Haifa, and Shenkar College of Engineering, Design, and Art
  Sculptural Variations of the Hidden and Exposed: A Contemporary Perspective on Nui-Shibori

- **Michal Ben Ari Babayof** Tel Aviv University
  Knotting the Self: Crochet as Bodily Extension in Chiharu Shiota's Thread Works

- **Ayelet Zohar** Tel Aviv University
  Sloughing the Skin: Woodcutting in Kurakake Junichi Shedding House, Echigo-Tsumari Art Field

11:30-12:00 **Coffee break**

12:00-12:45 **Panel 2**
KEYNOTE LECTURE **ONLINE**
Chair: **Michal Daliot-Bul** University of Haifa

Aaron William Moore University of Edinburgh
Development of Japanese Literary Science Fiction

12:45-13:45 **Lunch break**

Organized by:
Israeli Association for Japanese Studies

Conference steering committee:
Erez Golani Solomon, Helena Grinshpun, Dan Sherer

Venue:
Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design Jerusalem

Generously supported by:
The Japan Foundation
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Wednesday, 4 November

Venue:
Nathan Drahi Research and Innovation Center, 3F, Room 365

PROGRAM DAY 1

13:45-15:15 **Panel 3**

AFFECTIVE SPACES OF STRANGENESS, SPEECH AND SYMPATHY IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE CULTURAL FORMS

Chair: **Reut Harari** Tel Aviv University

- **Erez Golani Solomon** Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design Jerusalem
  Drawing, Writing Horror: Reading the Strangeness of Japanese Architecture through Uketsu
- **Maayan Barkan** Hunter College of the City University of New York (CUNY)
  Speaking Japanese, Thinking American: Communication Strategies, Underlying Norms, and Relational Implications in Japanese Language Learning
- **Michal Daliot-Bul** University of Haifa
  Tokyo Sympathy Tower: Words and Architectural Structures as Prisons

15:15-15:30 **Coffee break**

15:30-17:30 **Panel 4**

OBJECTS, RITUALS, AND PLAY IN JAPANESE CULTURAL LIFE

Chair: **Liora Sarfati** Tel Aviv University

- **Itamar Zadoff** University of Haifa
  We are Primitives of an Unknown Culture — Matsuri, Identity, and Continuity in the Japanese Hippie Community
- **Erez Joskovich** Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and Tel Aviv University
  Updated Instructions for the Cook: Ritual, Cuisine, and Proper Nutrition in Contemporary Japanese Zen Monasteries
- **Yoshiya Makita** Hitotsubashi University
  The Extraordinary Path to Mount Zion: The Growth of Indigenized Christianity in Late Twentieth-Century Japan
- **Dan Sherer** The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
  Chasing the Action: The Gambling Games of Pre-Modern Japan

Thursday, 5 November

PROGRAM DAY 2

Venues:
Nathan Drahi Research and Innovation Center, 3F, Room 365
Bezalel Research & Innovation Authority, 3F, Room 370

9:00-9:30 **Gathering**
Venue: Nathan Drahi Research and Innovation Center, 3rd Floor, Room 365.

9:30-11:00 **Panel 5**
JAPAN'S STRATEGIC REORIENTATION: TRADE, ALLIANCES, AND SECURITY
Chair and Discussant: **Danny Orbach** The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

- **Eyal Ben-Ari** Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security
  Japan's Accelerated Militarization: From Quiet Normalization to Overt Rearmament
- **Elad Ben David** INSS-ISGAP postdoctoral researcher
  Balancing Between Washington and Tehran: Japan's Strategic Relations with Iran in a Shifting Middle East
- **Alon Levkowitz** Bar-Ilan University
  Japan's new defense policy: Redefining the alliance with Washington and regional security cooperation

11:00-11:30 **Coffee break**

11:30-13.00 **Panel 6A (parallel panel)**
FIGURES OF INFLUENCE: MAKING AND TRANSMITTING KNOWLEDGE IN AESTHETICS, ARCHITECTURE, AND SCIENCE
Chair: **Irit Averbuch** Tel Aviv University, Emeritus

- **Galia Dor** Tel Aviv University, and Tel Hai University
  The Roots of omoshiroi: Surprise and Wonder in Zeami's Aesthetics and Beyond
- **Yona Siderer** The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
  Kawamoto Kōmin Chemistry Reader Kagaku Dokuhon and Other Books
- **Arie Kutz** Independent Researcher
  Kazuyo Sejima and the Shinohara School

11:30-13.00 **Panel 6B (parallel panel)**
Venue: Bezalel Research & Innovation Authority, 3rd Floor, Room 370.
ENCOUNTERS AND EXPRESSIONS IN JAPANESE VISUAL CULTURE
Chair: **Irina Lyan** The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

- **Irit Weinberg** Tel Aviv University
  Negotiating Foreignness in Contemporary Japanese Manga: Kuromaru's Tokyo Salad Bowl and Gao Yan's Sukima
- **Marat Galimov** The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
  What do YouTube users mean by "anime commercials"?
- **Raz Greenberg** Tel Aviv University, and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
  Coming a Full Circle: Miyazaki Hayao, Studio Ghibli and The Mechanical Monsters

13:00-14:00 **Lunch break**

Thursday, 5 November

PROGRAM DAY 2

Venues:
Nathan Drahi Research and Innovation Center, 3F, Room 365
Bezalel Research & Innovation Authority, 3F, Room 370

14:00-16:00 **Panel 7**
IDENTITY BUILDING PRACTICES: SITES, LEGACIES AND MEMORY
Chair: **Shira Taube Dayan** The Academic College of Tel Aviv—Yaffo

- **Roni Zadok Webber** Tel Aviv University
  The Humanless Sea: The "Kerama Blue", Tourism and Island Identities in Zamami-son islands, Okinawa
- **Yotam Gazit** Sophia University
  Muddied Memories — Narratives of the Minamata Disease in Contemporary Museums
- **Helena Grinshpun** The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Tel Hai University of the Galilee
  Tourism, Media, and the Boundaries of Belonging: Foreignness and Immigration in Contemporary Japan
- **Daniel Milne** Kyoto University **ONLINE**
  Regulating Overtourism: Short-Term Rentals and Community Resistance in Kyoto

16:15-16:45 **Coffee break**

16:15-17:00 **Panel 8**
KEYNOTE LECTURE **ONLINE**
Chair: **Dan Sherer** The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Ethan I. Segal Michigan State University
Learning from the Past: Wonder, Mystery, and the Challenge of Problematic Sources from Premodern Japan

17:00-17:15 **Epilogue and Closing**
Dan Sherer The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. IAJS Head of Academic Committee

19:00-21:00 **Farewell Dinner** (Advance reservation required)

Tuesday, 3 November

COLLABORATIVE EVENT

Venue:
Margulies Educational Center, Jerusalem Botanical Gardens
Yehuda Burla St 1, Jerusalem

15:00-20:00 **JAPAN CULTURE DAY (BUNKA NO HI)**
Celebrating Japanese Culture, Knowledge & Creativity
Jerusalem Botanical Gardens
https://tinyurl.com/3c33kerh

ABSTRACTS

Panel 1 (DAY 1)

CRAFTS AND THE FINE ARTS: BEYOND THE DIVISION OF GEIJUTSU INTO BIJUTSU (FINE ART) AND KŌGEI (CRAFT)

Chair: **Erez Golani Solomon** Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design Jerusalem

Discussant: **Oshrat Dotan** Tel Aviv University

Kazuko Kameda Madar Tel Aviv University, and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

From Kōgei to Mingei: Bamboo Basketry and the Changing Status of Craft in Modern Japan

This paper examines how bamboo basketry illuminates the changing status of craft in modern Japan, from the institutional category of **kōgei** to the ideological framework of **mingei**. During the Meiji period, established exhibitions, art schools, and export industries reorganized inherited craft practices according to distinctions between fine art, decorative art, and industrial production. Bamboo artists responded by transforming utilitarian baskets into technically virtuosic, authored works intended for display and collecting. Yet bamboo's associations with everyday use, regional knowledge, and anonymous labor later made it significant to the **mingei** movement. By tracing objects, makers, and critical discourse from the late nineteenth through the early twentieth century, this paper argues that bamboo basketry unsettled the boundary between art and craft. Its shifting valuation reveals that **kōgei** and **mingei** were not fixed or opposing categories, but competing modern constructions through which material skill, authorship, utility, and national identity were continually renegotiated in Japan.

Yael Harnik University of Haifa, and Shenkar College of Engineering, Design, and Art

Sculptural Variations of the Hidden and Exposed: A Contemporary Perspective on Nui-Shibori

Shibori, a traditional Japanese dyeing technique, serves to create distinctive patterns through manipulations such as tying, stitching, and folding. Focusing on **nui shibori** (stitched shibori), my lecture examines the coupling of this technique with the logic of weaving, applied to a printed striped fabric. This conceptual coupling was at the core of my solo exhibition"The Devil's Cloth" (Petach Tikva Museum of Art, 2025; Curator: Irena Gordon), which featured eight textile objects combining screen-printing with stitching and contracting manipulations.

My work draws from the tension between traditional Japanese and Western perceptions of stripes. While the Japanese perception relies on the concept of layering — viewing stripes as a sophisticated balance of simplicity and glamour — the Western perspective historically emphasizes contrast (which explains why, in the Middle Ages, stripes were used to mark figures outside the social order, such as beggars, lepers, and prisoners).

Through manual stitching and rhythmic contraction, I transform the flat striped fabric into a three-dimensional sculptural object. By traversing the binary logic of weaving (warp/weft, 0/1) and through careful planning of constants and variables, I transform the stripe pattern into monochromatic geometric shapes. Placing the thread over the colored stripe forces the white stripe to reveal itself upon contracting, while the colored stripe is concealed within the pleats' morphology — and vice versa. Based on examples from the exhibition and the work process, I demonstrate how deconstructing structured processes and focusing on a single action within them extracts a new conceptual perspective from the technical stages. This offers a framework for studying Japanese culture through linking materiality, perception, time, and space.

Michal Ben Ari Babayof Tel Aviv University

Knotting the Self: Crochet as Bodily Extension in Chiharu Shiota's Thread Works

This presentation examines two works by Japanese-born, Germany-based artist Chiharu Shiota (b. 1972), both shown in Ichinomiya at the Aichi Triennale 2022. In **Specimen Room**, sculptures from the Cell series were installed in a former nursing school's anatomical specimen room. The monumental site-specific installation **Following the Lin**e filled a saw-tooth-roofed (**nokogiri-yane**) textile factory, with red woolen yarn emerging from the remaining looms. Sharing Shiota's vocabulary of thread and entanglement, the works differ in technique, scale, and the histories they engage. In **Cell**, Shiota wraps glass forms in metal wire through a delicate, **crochet**-like hand technique, responding to the building's past as a medical institution. In **Following the Line**, Shiota and her team stretch thread across the space, evoking Ichinomiya's identity as a "city of textiles" since the Edo period. Situating these techniques within the modern hierarchy separating **bijutsu** (fine art) from **kōgei** (craft), with women's handwork below both, the presentation argues that Shiota's work fits neither these categories nor Yanagi Sōetsu's **mingei**, which reversed the hierarchy but kept its terms. Drawing instead on the concept of **wideware**, coined by Andy Clark and taken up by Tim Ingold through the image of a spider's web spun from its own body, it proposes that in both works thread extends the artist's body: folded back in intimate loops around the hand, or carried outward until the viewer enters the work. Shiota's thread works thus reclaim craft's bodily knowledge as a foundational, rather than marginal, mode of knotting the self.

Ayelet Zohar Tel Aviv University

Woodcutting in Kurakake Junichi 鞍掛純一 Shedding House「脱皮する家」Echigo-Tsumari Triennale, Hoshitōge Village

Woodcut (versus woodcarving) is a traditional craft associated with the surface of objects. In Japan, this method was used to create the complex system of woodblock printing in the Edo period, and beyond. Originating from Buddhist circles, and the desire to circulate the Buddha image to every potential believer, Buddhist monks adopted the woodblock printing method as an effective system for dissemination — much in the vein drawn by Walter Benjamin in his quintessential essay on "Mechanical Reproduction," in the Buddhist context, for the distribution of prints to large audiences. The great demand for popular images in Edo, woodcutting nurtured the industry of woodblock prints. This system created

specialists in woodcutting (as well as paper production, pigment production and multi-color printing techniques). However, the introduction of photography, and its infiltration into the visual systems of the public domain, brought the decline of woodcutting use on its industrial scale. Kurakake Junichi and his students adopted woodcutting for manipulating the surfaces of a deserted wooden farmhouse in the remote village of Hoshitōge 星峠 (Tokamachi-shi 十日町市, Niigata-ken新潟県). Through the use of cutting knives with a great effort, the team cut through every surface of the house — from beams to floors, walls to columns, furniture and walls — every inch. The result has the effect of a sloughing skin, shedding a layer of the outer shield, exposing the raw material "under the skin" as a metaphor for the personal situation of exposure, revelation and bringing to light the hidden layers that lie metaphorically under the surface, but also, peeling the protective, secretive, hidden layers of social life in Japan. Looking into this project through the theories of the skin, from Didier Anzieu's **The Skin Ego**, to Kuriyama Shigehisa 栗山茂久 introduction of the **Wind Skin**, I elaborate of Kurakake and his students' project and achievements in embodying one of the greatest dillemas in understanding the human body.

Panel 2 (DAY 1)

KEYNOTE LECTURE ONLINE

Chair: **Michal Daliot-Bul** University of Haifa

Aaron William Moore University of Edinburgh

The Development of Japanese Literary Science Fiction

It is still quite common to hear of Japanese science fiction as having its origins in the post-war era, with iconic writers such as Abe Kobo representing the formation of an 'organised movement'. Interviews with post-war fiction authors reveal, however, their own awareness of a much longer story, in which a form of popular literature was defined through transformations in media technology, social and economic structures, and other contemporary genres. This talk will examine the appearance of 'science fiction', sometimes called kagaku shōsetsu, as a process that featured four distinct engagements: with mid-Meiji political novels and 'chronicles of the future', late Meiji adventure stories, inter-war detective fiction, and finally the post-WWI science magazine culture culminating in the Showa before the era of total war from 1937. By looking at these literary encounters, and the social, technological, and economic forces that contextualised them, this talk also invites a critical discussion about cultural formation in Japan before 1945, which the intellectual Hirabayashi Hatsunosuke once averred was driven not solely by social class or political ideology, but 'by the engineer's hand'.

Panel 3 (DAY 1)

AFFECTIVE SPACES OF STRANGENESS, SPEECH AND SYMPATHY IN CONTEMPORARY JAPANESE CULTURAL FORMS

Chair: **Reut Harari** Tel Aviv University

Erez Golani Solomon Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design Jerusalem

Drawing, Writing Horror: Reading the Strangeness of Japanese Architecture through Uketsu

This paper explores the strange houses of Uketsu, an anonymous Japanese writer at the center of a contemporary cultural phenomenon. We will trace his emergence as a distinctive public figure and consider what his work reveals about architecture and contemporary Japanese society. Uketsu has developed a niche genre: horror narrated through architecture. His writing turns ordinary, generic houses into sites of deviation and unease. Architecture itself becomes the antagonist. Everyday houses become puzzles; horror emerges within them and through them, from the discrepancy between the orderly logic of their design and the sense of "wrongness" embedded within them. Spatial irregularities—planning anomalies, functional dissonances, and distorted boundaries—undermine their internal logic and the sense of security associated with home.

We will examine how Uketsu's strange houses combine narrative structure, visual interactivity, and social commentary. Words and floor plans invite readers to participate in unraveling the mystery. Reading becomes a forensic investigation of architecture, in which spatial anomalies reveal human intentions, family secrets, power relations, and mechanisms of concealment and control. We will also explore how Uketsu brings together two line-based systems of representation: writing and architectural drawing. Writing organizes meaning through linguistic sequence; drawing organizes it through spatial relationships. The story takes shape through the dialogue between these systems and the readers' continual movement between the two modes of reading. Finally, we will consider how Uketsu's work engages with the desires and anxieties of contemporary Japanese society, and how architecture and its representations mediate and organize them. Through ordinary houses, Uketsu reveals the strange within the normal, offering an unsettling perspective on the home, the family, and the built environment in contemporary Japan.

Maayan Barkan Hunter College of the City University of New York (CUNY)

Speaking Japanese, Thinking American: Communication Strategies, Underlying Norms, and Relational Implications in Japanese Language Learning

English, like Hebrew, is considered one of the lowest-context languages where most information is conveyed explicitly through words. Japanese, conversely, is one of the highest-context languages where information is coded in context or internalized by speakers. However, Japanese language instruction in the U.S. rarely addresses high-context

communication style, instead focusing primarily on grammar, vocabulary, and survival communication. This potentially leads to many U.S. learners applying low-context communication style when speaking Japanese.
This presentation examines this gap in three levels: (1) differences in communication-strategy choices, (2) differences in the socio-cultural norms, and (3) the way learners' strategy choices are perceived by Japanese native speakers. This presentation will also suggest a model of instruction that links these three levels for the purposes of developing more culturally competent Japanese language learners.
Advanced Japanese learners from a university in New York City (n=22) and Japanese native speakers from universities in Aichi and Kyoto Prefectures (n=30) were video-recorded performing identical role-plays in Japanese, designed to elicit low- and high-context differences. In a focus group, the native speakers reviewed the learners' videos and were prompted to address differences in strategies, explain socio-cultural norms underlying their own strategies, and discuss the relational impact that learners' low-context repeated strategies might cause. Learners then reviewed both groups' footage, offering their own perspective on these differences.
Equipped with a packet summarizing native speakers' strategies, learners then practiced and re-recorded several role-plays. Results showed increased awareness, marked improvement in learners' use of high-context communication strategies, and increased motivation to master them.

Michal Daliot-Bul University of Haifa

Tokyo Sympathy Tower: Words and Architectural Structures as Prisons

This paper discusses a literary work concerned with language, miscommunication across divides, and architecture that imposes, reveals, and conceals. Rie Qudan's 2024 Akutagawa Award-winning novella, Tokyo Sympathy Tower, is here to throw you off balance. This is a speculative fiction novella that grotesquely declares: rather than liberating expressions of the human spirit and its endless creative capacity, communicative structures are prisons—prisons that impose their walls upon consciousness, upon space, upon possibilities. This holds whether the structures are as ephemeral as words or as solid as high-rise buildings. The more eloquent they are, the more so. It is a story about transparent boundaries and imposed boundaries, about prohibitions and permissions, about creation and destruction, about liberalism coming full circle to tyranny, and, above all, about the dark matrix underlying what we call communication.
Far from reflecting merely on the contemporary "Japanese condition," the novella leaves it to readers to consider whether things have always been this way, an epistemological truism of a sort, or whether the novella is a sharp critique of our post-information world; one in which language has been thoroughly instrumentalized, algorithmically generated, and emptied of shared meaning and warmth, in ways that reverberate through the whole of our human environment and existence.

Panel 4 (DAY 1)

OBJECTS, RITUALS, AND PLAY IN JAPANESE CULTURAL LIFE

Chair: **Liora Sarfati** Tel Aviv University

Itamar Zadoff University of Haifa

We are Primitives of an Unknown Culture — Matsuri, Identity, and Continuity in the Japanese Hippie Community

Six decades after its emergence, the Japanese hippie movement can hardly be dismissed as a fleeting counterculture. What began with a small group in Shinjuku's coffeehouses in 1967 and the Buzoku communes has evolved into an intergenerational community with fixed gathering places, documented history, cultural heroes, and its own matsuri (祭り).
This paper examines the hippie matsuri as the arena where the community's identity takes shape, weaving together Japanese traditions, global counterculture influences, and diverse spiritual sources, including Jōmon and Ainu imagery, into a communal practice that sustains rather than resolves the tension between local and cosmopolitan. Calling themselves "natives of an unknown culture," community members craft a distinctly Japanese tradition and an alternative Japanese identity alongside the mainstream, independent of its frameworks.
The matsuri, I argue, do not merely reflect community life but sustain its intergenerational continuity through their capacity for containment. They absorb a
vast range of cultural phenomena, from trance parties and activism workshops to spirituality, allowing the tension between local and global to persist unresolved. Glocalization is thus not a process that runs its course but an ongoing condition enabling the continuous formation of cultural identities.
The paper is based on historical research and ethnographic fieldwork in matsuri across Japan (2019 to 2025), and interviews with key figures in the community. It presents Japanese hippiedom not as a bygone episode but as a living tradition still shaping alternative Japanese identities.

Erez Joskovich Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and Tel Aviv University

Updated Instructions for the Cook: Ritual, Cuisine, and Proper Nutrition in Contemporary Japanese Zen Monasteries

In his **Instructions for the Monastic Cook** (**Tenzo kyōkun**), Dōgen (1200—1253) presents food preparation as an integral part of Zen training. This work and similar texts became important sources in shaping the modern image of cooking in the Zen tradition, which has come to be associated with simplicity, restraint, attentiveness, and respect for ingredients. As these values moved beyond their original monastic context, they became part of a broader "Zen culture." Today, they underpin the presentation of **shōjin ryōri** as a refined and meticulously crafted culinary experience offered in high-end restaurants and Buddhist temple lodgings (**shukubō**).

This image, however, is far removed from the food actually consumed in Spacial Training Monasteries (**senmon dōjō**), which has historically been, and remains, simple and at times meager. Within monastic training, the primary emphasis is not on the food's taste, appearance, or ingredients, but on the actions and rituals involved in its preparation and consumption. Cooking, serving, receiving food, eating, and washing the dishes are regulated bodily practices integral to the disciplining of the monastic body. The standard monastic diet, consisting of simple and limited plant-based meals, illustrates the distance between the public aesthetics of **shōjin ryōri** and the ascetic and ritual character of Zen training. Food serves here not as an object of aesthetic enjoyment but as a means of training body and mind.

This paper examines a two-way movement between the monastery and modern society. In one direction, ideals of simplicity, attentiveness, and ethics detached from their ritual and disciplinary contexts and reformulated as a culinary discourse concerning a "Zen" approach to food. In the other, modern principles of nutrition, health, hygiene, and food safety enter training monasteries, transforming their menus, kitchens, and the cook's work. Concerns about nutritional deficiencies lead to adjustments intended to meet the monks' physical needs, while refrigeration and storage facilities, standardized equipment, and sanitation procedures alter the material conditions of food preparation.

Examining the kitchen as a site of material culture reveals how Zen is mediated and materialized at the intersection of discourse, technology, and embodied practice. Cooking exposes both the gap between romantic images of Zen and monastic life and the material processes through which a religious tradition is produced and transformed within modernity.

Yoshiya Makita Hitotsubashi University

The Extraordinary Path to Mount Zion: The Growth of Indigenized Christianity in Late Twentieth-Century Japan

This paper explores the growth of indigenized Christianity in late twentieth-century Japan. Amid the social upheaval that followed the end of the Asia Pacific War, new religious groups sprang up across the devastated Japanese islands. Within Christian circles, Makuya and other groups emerged as new currents in Japanese Christianity. Drawing inspiration from Japan's premodern religious traditions, these small groups began to develop their own distinctive religious ideas and practices.

To distance themselves from the institutional Christian establishment shaped by Western influences, they further turned to Jewish religious traditions in Israel as their point of reference. Through the close intertwining of Japanese and Jewish religious traditions, Christianity underwent a unique process of indigenization in postwar Japan. Moving beyond previous scholarship hat has centered on the religious thought and practice of the founders, this paper examines the lived experiences of lay believers. Based on the records of regularly held seminars and gatherings organized by these Christian groups, this paper inquires the ways in which lay believers internalized the worldviews offered by indigenized Christianity as a framework for understanding the various difficulties they faced in late twentieth-century Japanese society.

A close examination of indigenized Christianity from a bottom-up perspective sheds new light on the cultural hybridity that has shaped religious traditions in contemporary Japanese history.

Dan Sherer The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Chasing the Action: The Gambling Games of Pre-Modern Japan

Gambling has been illegal in Japan for as long as Japan has existed, its criminality affirmed by law codes from the eighth century to the modern day. And yet, it was ubiquitous, from emperors and princes who wagered mansions to warriors who gambled away their arms on the eve of battle. Indeed, despite the blatant illegality of their trade, professional gamblers appear in a surprising number of legal and literary sources, and until the 14th century or so professional gamblers were acknowledged, if somewhat begrudgingly, as professionals. However, little, if any, attempt has been made to make sense not only of the people who gambled but of the games themselves. Worse, speculation and assumption about the games has led to a great degree of confusion about their nature, leading to confusion in many studies and translations. But gambling games, like rituals and entertainments, had a significance to the players and to their world at large, and it is important to try and place these in their context. In this talk, I will explore the gambling games of pre-modern Japan, with a special eye towards how the various games and their players were perceived. Some games, like go and chess, were games of the aristocracy, and others, like the mysterious but ubiquitous **shi-ichi han**, had no such associations, and were viewed with scorn by the elites and denounced specifically in official edicts. And of course, the king of gambling games, **sugoroku**, was beloved by the elites but also played by a wide swath of Japanese society. By looking at the way the various games were played, described and proscribed, we will examine the role of those games and of their players in pre-modern Japanese culture.

Panel 5 (Day 2)

JAPAN'S STRATEGIC REORIENTATION: TRADE, ALLIANCES, AND SECURITY

Chair and Discussant: **Danny Orbach** The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Eyal Ben-Ari Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security

Japan's Accelerated Militarization: From Quiet Normalization to Overt Rearmament

For most of the postwar era, Japan's Self-Defense Forces occupied an anomalous position: a substantial military that could not name itself as such, legitimated obliquely through disaster relief, civil engineering, and carefully choreographed public relations. My earlier ethnographic work on the SDF traced how its members constructed professional military identities under conditions of constitutional constraint and public ambivalence, and how the organization pursued legitimacy through what may be termed "camouflaged" normalization—an incremental embedding of military institutions within civilian frames. This paper argues that since 2022 Japan has shifted from this decades-long pattern of quiet normalization to an accelerated, overt militarization. The revised National Security Strategy, the doubling of defense expenditure toward two percent of GDP, the acquisition of counterstrike capabilities, relaxed arms-export rules, and deepening operational integration with the United States and regional partners mark a qualitative transformation rather than mere continuity. Drawing on my framework of military culture as a set of embodied dispositions and organizational practices, I examine how this acceleration is being managed culturally: how the SDF's carefully cultivated "gentle" image is being recalibrated for deterrence, how recruitment crises and demographic decline constrain expansion, and how public opinion has moved from ambivalence to conditional acceptance under perceived threats from China, North Korea, and Russia. Japan's case, I suggest, illuminates how militarization proceeds not only through budgets and doctrine but through the reworking of the cultural scripts that render armed force thinkable..

Elad Ben David INSS-ISGAP postdoctoral researcher

Balancing Between Washington and Tehran: Japan's Strategic Relations with Iran in a Shifting Middle East

Japan's relationship with Iran represents one of the most complex dimensions of its Middle East policy, reflecting the challenge of balancing strategic, economic, and diplomatic interests. Since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, Japan has succeeded in maintaining relatively stable relations with Iran under ongoing U.S. pressure, preserving diplomatic engagement even during periods of intensified international isolation imposed on Iran. However, the Iran-Israel Twelve-Day War in 2025, with the recent 2026 Iran war, involving massive military involvement from the U.S., has further complicated this delicate balance.

The paper argues that Japan—Iran relations amid recent regional escalations illustrate Japan's cautious and balanced Middle East policy, which prioritizes dialogue, regional stability, and diplomacy despite growing challenges to its strategic ties with Tehran. As a longstanding ally and key energy partner, Iran remains important to Japan, whose dependence on the stability of the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz has reinforced Tokyo's preference for de-escalation and diplomacy over confrontation. Consequently, alongside preserving its ties with Tehran, Japan has sought to maintain its essential strategic alliance with the U.S. This paper examines the evolution of Japan—Iran relations since pre- and post-1979 Islamic Revolution, demonstrating how the recent escalation illustrates Japan's distinctive strategy of balancing its alliance with the U.S., its energy security interests, and its longstanding preference for pragmatic diplomacy. The paper concludes by assessing whether future regional escalation will represent a turning point in Japan's Middle East policy towards Iran, or a continuation of Tokyo's longstanding balancing strategy toward Tehran and Washington.

Alon Levkowitz Bar-Ilan University

Japan's new defense policy: Redefining the alliance with Washington and regional security cooperation

Japan's defense policy has undergone significant yet gradual transformation since the establishment of the Japan Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) in the 1950s. While postwar security policy was long constrained by constitutional interpretations emphasizing exclusively defensive capabilities, the past two decades, particularly under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, have marked a significant turning point. Japan has expanded the scope of self-defense, increased defense spending toward 2 percent of GDP, and initiated the acquisition of advanced military capabilities, including middle-range and intercepting strike systems. These reforms aim to strengthen Japan's deterrence posture, reduce its dependence on the United States for regional security, and enhance its ability to respond to emerging threats, including the option of counterstrike capabilities against imminent attacks (North Korea).

This paper examines the principal factors driving Japan's evolving defense policy. First, it analyzes the U.S.-Japan alliance, which remains the cornerstone of Japan's national security. Although American leaders have consistently described the alliance as "solid as a rock," growing uncertainty regarding long-term U.S. strategic commitments has encouraged Japanese policymakers to assume greater responsibility for national defense. Second, the paper explores the impact of the regional security environment. North Korea's advancing nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs have compelled Japan to strengthen its missile defense and develop counterstrike capabilities. At the same time, China's growing military power and Russia's increasingly assertive military posture following the war in Ukraine have reinforced Japan's perception of a deteriorating strategic environment. Third, Japan began to reach out for alliances in the Indo-Pacific region. This change is another layer in Japan's defense policy. These developments have accelerated Japan's transition toward a more proactive and capable defense policy while maintaining the U.S.-Japan alliance as its strategic foundation.

Panel 6A (Day 2)

FIGURES OF INFLUENCE: MAKING AND TRANSMITTING KNOWLEDGE IN AESTHETICS, ARCHITECTURE, AND SCIENCE

Chair: **Irit Averbuch** Tel Aviv University, Emeritus

Galia Dor Tel Aviv University, and Tel Hai University

The Roots of omoshiroi 面白い: Surprise and Wonder in Zeami's Aesthetics and Beyond

Zeami Motokiyo (1363 –1443), the well-known Noh playwright and actor, is one of the most important voices in the abstraction of Japanese aesthetics; over forty years, he compiled over 21 treatises {e.g., the **Fushikaden** ("Style and Flower")} in which he applies insights from the **kojiki**, Zen Buddhist and even Chinese texts (such as the **Analects**), giving fresh interpretations to drama theory as well as to concepts such as **sabi**, **yūgen**, **mujō** and **ma**, to name a few. In this paper I wish to concentrate on one of Zeami's unique works—the **Shugyoku Tokka** ("Finding the jewel, attaining the flower")—which is organized as a dialogue between Zeami and an anonymous questioner; among many themes, it seems that Zeami paid special attention to the subject of **audience response**, and in particular, to the underlying psychological states that change according to the play's progress on stage. It is in this context that he discusses three intriguing concepts, namely, **myo** (mystery), **hana** (flower) and **omoshiro** (fascination)— connecting them to a pivotal moment in Japanese mythology, that is, the retreat of Sun Goddess Amaterasu Omikami into the 'Heavenly Rock Cave', and the events that ensue as a consequence. Discussing **omoshiroi**, Zeami defines it as "the mental instant when a performance is perceived as 'fascinating'—a sensation of no-mind". My talk will focus on Zeami's theory in the context of Japanese mythology and Noh, and will also point to the usage of 'surprise and wonder' in other fields, such as traditional and contemporary Japanese architecture.

Yona Siderer The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Kawamoto Kōmin Chemistry Reader Kagaku Dokuhon and Other Books

Japan started studying books from the West by translating books in Dutch in late 18th century; Original Dutch books or translated into Dutch from other European languages, were allowed to enter Japan by the ruling Tokugawa authorities.

The scholars and physicians Udagawa Youan (宇田川 榕菴 1798-1846)[1] and Kawamoto Kōmin (川本 幸民 1810-1871), are the more prominent chemistry translators of their time. Kawamoto translated several chemistry books, studied by Toshifumi Yatsumimi.[2]

In 化学読本 **Kagaku dokuhon**, Chemistry Reader, a rare book I found in the archive of Kyoto's International Research Center for Japanese Studies, Nichibunken, Kawamoto Kōmin listed, for the first time in Japan, a scholarly table of thirty-seven chemical elements' symbols. (fig.: NCHO).

Kawamoto's translation of **Kagaku dokuhon** from Dutch, contributing to chemistry terminology, and a comparison between Japanese and Chinese acceptance of Western chemistry elements' symbols, will be presented.

1) Yona Siderer , Udagawa Youan (1798-1846), Pioneer of Chemistry Studies in Japan from Western Sources and his. Published in: "Substantia", an International Journal for the History of Chemistry, published by the University of Firenze, Italy. Vol. 5 no.1, March 2021. pp. 99-117. https://riviste.fupress.net/index.php/subs/issue/view/52
2) Yatsumimi Toshifumi, in Encyclopedic Dictionary of the History of Chemistry. Edited by the Japanese Society for the History of Chemistry. Kagaku-Dojin Publishing Co., Inc. Kyoto, 2017, p. 365.

Arie Kutz Independent Researcher

Kazuyo Sejima and the Shinohara School

This article examines the architectural lineage of the **Shinohara School**, tracing a conceptual evolution from Kazuo Shinohara's symbolic structuralism to Kazuyo Sejima's vanishing, atmospheric spaces.

Grounded in the philosophies of **Claude Lévi-Strauss** (Shinohara) and **Walter Benjamin** (Toyo Ito), the study explores the transformation of the architectural expressions and the (Japanese) concept of **MA** across three generations.

Shinohara utilized binary opposites to define architecture as a rigid "Sign," whereas his younger follower, Toyo Ito transitioned toward modular "flows" of information and light.

This trajectory culminates in Kazuyo Sejima and SANAA, whose radical thinness and **phenomenal transparency** achieve an "equivalence of spaces" that dissolves the boundary between nature and culture.

Through key projects like the Tanikawa House and the new Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem, the article illustrates a professional shift toward democratized, boundary-less design where physical mass recedes into a sensory background for human activity.

Panel 6B (Day 2)

ENCOUNTERS AND EXPRESSIONS IN JAPANESE VISUAL CULTURE

Chair: **Irina Lyan** The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Irit Weinberg Tel Aviv University

Negotiating Foreignness in Contemporary Japanese Manga: Kuromaru's Tokyo Salad Bowl and Gao Yan's Sukima

In recent years, debates on immigration and multicultural coexistence have permeated social media and popular culture in Japan. Amid these discourses and a concurrent resurgence of conservative voices, manga and television dramas have become sites for negotiating the visibility of foreigners in Japan.

This presentation examines representations of non-Japanese residents in Kuromaru's manga **Tōkyō Saradabōru** (Tokyo Salad Bowl, adapted into an NHK live-action drama in 2025), alongside **Sukima** (Gap, 2025) by Gao Yan, a Taiwanese artist based in Japan. **Tokyo Salad Bowl** follows an eccentric female detective, whose hair is dyed green, and a brooding police translator with a complicated past. They encounter various foreigners, who in some way or another become involved in crime, whether it be as victims or perpetrators. While **Tokyo Salad Bowl** aims to counter stereotypes and present foreigners as complex human beings who

happen to make Japan their home, it ultimately reinforces a Japanese—non-Japanese divide and overlooks deeper historical entanglements. In contrast, Gao foregrounds transnational and trans-minority connections exploring and questioning notions of identity and belonging. In **Sukima** a Taiwanese art student arrives for a year of study abroad in Okinawa and forges connections with a cast of various people, Japanese, Okinawan and Chinese. Gao draws parallels between Taiwan and Okinawa through shared histories of annexation and occupation, weaving personal narratives that traverse national boundaries. Instead of creating the dichotomy of Japanese versus foreign, Gao crafts a complex web of belongings that calls for attention to history.

Marat Galimov The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

What do YouTube users mean by "anime commercials"?

In the age of AI-generated imagery and digital compositing when animation is almost indistinguishable from live action advertising I turn to the phenomenon of so-called "anime commercials" and ask what does it mean. Based on data gathered through the YouTube's search bar crawls (around 800 hits for the "anime commercial" search) I present a visualised network analysis of the most visible anime commercials and 12 diverse YouTube playlists devoted to them to show the following. First, the most viewed or reshared examples are often not of Japanese origin. So are not the owners of the relevant YouTube channels. Secondly, anime commercials seldom reference the existing anime products. These findings lead me to conclude that "anime commercials" are a misnomer and this hybrid cultural product instead requires an alternative definition which I provide based on data scraped from the primary material itself.
Although this is not the first research to utilise a YouTube playlist to explore Japanese animated commercials its contribution lies in a graphical analysis of how anime commercials function within the video sharing platforms after the end of their initial marketing campaigns. This work contributes to a wider field of media studies as well as to social network theory and stakeholder analysis in particular.

Raz Greenberg Tel Aviv University, and The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Coming a Full Circle: Miyazaki Hayao, Studio Ghibli and The Mechanical Monsters

The influence of the animated cartoons produced in the American studio founded by brothers Max (1883-1972) and David Fleischer's American animated cartoons on Japanese comics, animation and popular culture in general has been well-documented, from pre-war and WWII Japanese cartoons (as noted by scholars as Jonathan Clements) to post-war comics, animation and video games (for example, in the works of Tezuka Osamu, as analyzed by Frederik Schodt). This paper examines the influence the the 1941 animated short The Mechanical Monsters, produced by the Fleischer brothers, had on the works of Japanese animation director Hayao Miyazaki throughout his career, arguing that this influence divides Miyazaki's into two eras — of his early works as an animator, where the film influenced his work on films and television shows as Flying Phantom Ship (Soratobu Yūreisen, 1969) and Lupin the Third (Rupan Sansei, 1980) and his work in his own studio, Ghibli, where his film Castle in the Sky (Tenkū no Shiro Rapyuta, 1986) was the last work by the director which can be argued to have been influenced by the Fleischers' short. The divide, as the paper will show, is not just aesthetic and narrative, but also ideological — after Castle in the Sky, Miyazaki's ideas developed further beyond the more simplistic dichotomy of freedom and tyranny as presented by the Fleischer brothers.

Panel 7 (Day 2)

IDENTITY BUILDING PRACTICES: SITES, LEGACIES AND MEMORY

Chair: **Shira Taube Dayan** The Academic College of Tel Aviv—Yaffo

Roni Zadok Webber Tel Aviv University

The Humanless Sea: The "Kerama Blue", Tourism and Island Identities in Zamami-son islands, Okinawa

Okinawa, Japan's southernmost prefecture, consists of a chain of approximately 160 islands, 40 of which are inhabited, stretching over 1,000 kilometers from Kyushu in the north to Taiwan in the south. This archipelagic configuration has given rise to multiple local identities, expressed through distinct dialects, rituals, histories, and social and cultural practices (Taira, 1997; Allen, 2002; Arasaki, 2005; Heinrich et al., 2009; Oguma, 2014). Despite this, both Japanese and English language scholarship on identity in Okinawa has paid relatively little attention to the island itself as a category of identity or to its role in shaping identity, instead treating it primarily as a geographical given.
Drawing on ethnographic research and fieldwork conducted on the islands of Zamami, Aka, and Geruma in the Kerama Islands, a community of approximately 900 residents whose economy depends almost entirely on tourism, I demonstrate how the sea functions as a central (though not exclusive) spatial domain through which identity is constituted, maintained, and transformed through everyday practices, rituals, materiality, and mobility.
I further examine the gap between the richness of people's lived relationship with the sea and its touristic representation across a range of promotional media. These representations construct a "humanless sea": a pristine, blue, and visually spectacular seascape stripped of its historical and colonial contexts, serving Japan's tourism economy and its efforts to position Okinawa as the "Hawaii of Japan" (Tada, 2015), a beautiful tropical destination fit for every vacation.

Yotam Gazit Sophia University

Muddied Memories — Narratives of the Minamata Disease in Contemporary Museums

"Minamata Disease" is the official name of the mass methylmercury poisoning incident that took place in the coastal city of Minamata, Kumamoto prefecture, caused by heavy industrial pollution by a local chemical factory producing fertilizer between 1951-1968. This ecological

disaster, along with its victims' struggle for recognition and compensation against both the private and public sectors, has become a significant and controversial issue in contemporary Japanese history and politics. In the city of Minamata, two museums are dedicated to the disease and its victims, "The Minamata Disease History Investigation Museum", a private museum run by a victims' association NGO "Soshisha" and supported by donations, and "Minamata Disease Document Museum", a public museum run and funded by the municipal government. While both institutions generally agree on the core historical facts, each presents its own narrative describing the story of the Minamata Disease. The private museum describes it as a political struggle of an underprivileged community against government neglect and societal bigotry, while the municipal museum focuses on the story of Minamata's rebirth into a global hub of ecological and environmental reform. This presentation, which is based on field research conducted in Minamata for an upcoming journal paper, will discuss the differing and often contradictory narratives displayed in both museums and how their competition over the public memory of the disaster affects the survivors, the city at large, and how the municipal museum's 'victory' has influenced both general public perception and government policy regarding industrial pollution and ecological sustainability.

Helena Grinshpun The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and Tel Hai University of the Galilee

Tourism, Media, and the Boundaries of Belonging: Foreignness and Immigration in Contemporary Japan

This paper examines how over-tourism and immigration debates in contemporary Japan have become mutually reinforcing arenas for negotiating national identity and the boundaries of belonging. In certain destinations, excess tourism is framed as causing infrastructural collapse, while other regions suffer from tourism deficiency; this tension highlights issues of tourism routing and Japan's self-branding as an intensely desirable destination. Recent policy responses—such as dual pricing for foreign visitors and the physical concealment of iconic views—signal a shift from open hospitality to managed, conditional welcome.

At the same time, the public discourse portrays tourists as cultural enemies, with media reports regularly featuring "horror stories" of disrespectful visitors. Parallel debates on immigration, advanced by a conservative government, similarly demonize migrants as threats to social order and national culture, as seen in recent protests and moral panics over alleged plans to admit African labor migrants. The paper argues that a perceptual overlap has emerged between the figures of the tourist and the immigrant: both are constructed as undesirable outsiders, despite their economic necessity.

Daniel Milne Kyoto University **ONLINE**

Regulating Overtourism: Short-Term Rentals and Community Resistance in Kyoto

Over the past decade, short-term rentals (STRs) have driven significant local opposition to overtourism worldwide. Kyoto—the epicenter of Japan's overtourism debate—has pioneered strict municipal policies to limit **minpaku** (private lodging), including seasonal operating windows and cap-on-days restrictions. However, critics argue these measures remain ineffective, fueling grassroots neighborhood resistance.

This talk evaluates the efficacy of Kyoto's STR policies alongside local community opposition. Specifically, it examines the municipal objectives driving Kyoto's regulatory framework, how neighborhood identity and community structures, such as **chōnaikai** (town associations), influence acceptance or resistance to **minpaku**. It will also consider the risks facing foreign residents caught in local anti-STR sentiment and lessons Kyoto can draw from international cities managing similar accommodation challenges.

Panel 8 (Day 2)

KEYNOTE LECTURE **ONLINE**

Chair: **Dan Sherer** The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Ethan I. Segal Michigan State University

Learning from the Past: Wonder, Mystery, and the Challenge of Problematic Sources from Premodern Japan

What does the study of premodern Japan offer to students in the twenty-first century? Living in an age when the speed of technological innovation seems to be getting ever quicker and things that are "new" are generally praised as "best," how can we persuade students that it is worth their time to study the distant past? In this presentation, I attempt to answer those questions by arguing that we, as scholars and educators, should help students discover a sense of wonder, cultivate curiosity, and realize that they have the potential to engage in meaningful debate and challenge accepted historical understandings. I make the case by drawing on examples from twenty years of teaching and research but will discuss three cases in detail. First, the diary of Murasaki Shikibu reveals that romance, marriage, birth-giving, and more in the world of the Heian court were, to our modern sensibilities, so strange that we can only appreciate them while filled with wonder and amazement. Second, the assassination of the third shōgun, Minamoto no Sanetomo, might seem at first glance to have been a straightforward revenge killing, but probing the suspects' motives reveals a mystery that remains unsolved even today. Third, conflicting depictions of Hōjō Masako, best known as the wife of the first shōgun, highlight the importance of thinking critically about historical sources and demonstrate how we might overturn long-accepted ideas about the past. Through these and other examples, I suggest some ways for helping us all discover the potential of the past as an era worth our time.