

# The German-Japanese Society of Saarbrücken

## 1. Introduction – history - background

The German – Japanese Society of Saarbrücken is has an important function in the cultural, economic and scientific relationships between the Saarland and Japan. The members work on a voluntary basis, and invest their time to reach these aims. Without this commitment the Society could not exist and the topical relationships would not exist.

34 inhabitants of the Saarland, founded the German-Japanese Society of Saarbrücken in March 1987. The founders came from different sectors i.e. consultants in foreign trade, from the board directors of Saarbergwerke AG, from automobile industry, the chief executive of Asko and a lot of other managers of companies represent the founders of the economic sector. Furthermore, the former president of the University of the Saarland Mr Meiser, one student and several professors were the representatives of the science. Naturally, the political sector was represented: Dr. Ottokar Hahn, one former minister of the Saarland, moreover the president of the central bank of the Saarland and a head of division of the tax and finance ministry. Other important persons are to mention: First, Dr. Thilo Graf, deceased last year, was partner during the foundation. He had experiences in leading a German-Japanese society, because he was the general secretary of the Japanese-German Centre Berlin from 1985 – 1998. There was also one person, who by initiative of the society became teacher for Japanese at the university. Finally, artists and Japanese inhabitants from different sectors were the founders of the society.

## 2. The association of the German-Japanese societies

The German-Japanese Society of Saarbrücken is not the only one. There are 46 German-Japanese societies in Germany with around 9000 members. One can compare it with a big network. On the top of these societies there is the holding organization: the association of the German-Japanese societies. It is rooted in tradition to the Wa-Doku-Kai, which was founded by German and Japanese students in 1888. "The Wa-Doku-Kai was the first of the so called binational societies in Germany and the first society to unite members of German and non-

European cultural origins.” It organized lectures on Japanese topics, excursions, discussions, a library in Berlin, exhibitions and parties. Therefore this society wanted to spread knowledge about Japan in Germany. In 1929 this society developed into the German-Japanese Society of Berlin.

The association of the German-Japanese societies serves a particular purpose: the promotion of the relationship between Germany and Japan, particularly in the fields of culture, science, economy and society. For reaching this aim the members promote the communication and meetings between the members in both countries, organize the annual general meeting for strengthening the cooperation between all German-Japanese societies and plan common regional, national and international activities. Besides they are in contact with the Japanese-German-societies and the association of these Japanese-German societies in Japan, which are the counterparts of the societies in Germany. “The German-Japanese association directs its attention to the student exchange programme.” The association offers Home stay-, internship- and study programs where young Japanese and Germans can get in touch. It is important for the association that young people participate in such programs, because the young people are the decision makers of the future. So they will be sensitized for the foreign culture and will not have prejudices.

The existence of this association with its societies contributed indirectly to the foundation of the Society of Saarbrücken. The existence of these institutions could be an impetus for the founders.

### 3. The topical members of the Society

Most of the founding members are still active in the Society today by organizing or participating in events. At the moment one counts about 220 members from the same sectors like the founders. A large number of professors and students from the faculties medicine, economic, IT, law and philosophy at the Saarland University are members. The University of Applied Sciences Saarland is also member since the beginning of the cooperation with a Japanese university. After studying one year in Japan, a student of the University of Applied Sciences became member, too. Moreover no topical politician is member, except for but Dr. Peter Müller, the minister-president, who has been elected to honorary member. The number of Japanese members increased; by a group of about 20 Japanese medical doctors of

urology. The German research in urology, particularly in Saarland, has been pioneer also to the Japanese medicine.

#### **4. The objectives of the German-Japanese Society of Saarbrücken**

Generally speaking, the Society has the objective to support the economic, scientific and cultural relationships between Japan and the Saarland. In detail, it wants to promote the exchange of information, the spreading of knowledge of Japan in Germany and in return of Germany in Japan. Furthermore it aims at developing a network of multipliers of the Saarland, who are interested in Japan. The multipliers should be companies which have contacts with Japanese firms or important persons who have experience in working or who deal with Japanese. As a conclusion, the multipliers should be persons who consider the relationship to Japan as a serious task and who could share their experiences with others.

The direct methods for realizing the objectives are organizing a diversity of events, meetings, lectures and excursions. Moreover the Society has installed four sections: medicine, law, culture and economic, so that the general objective, meaning the support of economic, scientific and cultural relationships, could be easily reached. This is the indirect way, because in these sections the preconditions for the German – Japanese relationships are generated, for example the start and assistance of cooperations between Japanese and German universities. The direct method is the exchange of students. The target groups for the activities are companies and persons from the region SarLorLux, the con-urbation between Zweibrücken, Alzey, Trier, Luxembourg and Metz.

## **5. The realisation of the objectives**

### **5.1. Lectures and meetings**

The Society offers lectures and meetings in all four sections.

#### **5.1.1. in the section law**

On the one hand German professors of the faculty jurisprudence of the Saarland University give lectures with topics like “Introduction in the Japanese law” (Author of the translation: Carmen Schulze) and people of the practice, like lawyers, talk about “Japan and the European Community”. On the other hand lectures are given by Japanese from Osaka, Tokyo and Kobe, who report for example on the German influence in the Japanese law. In both cases the two cultures can come in contact. Although the speakers are from Germany, the theme about Japan combines the German professors and the German students with the Japanese law system. That is the indirect way of cultural exchange. Naturally, Japanese speakers are a better precondition to reach a direct meeting between the two cultures. It is like language courses; when they are given by native speakers you can learn more about the foreign culture. Moreover it is a direct intercultural contact, which is also reached, when Japanese participate in the lectures and discuss with the German audience.

#### **5.1.2. in the section economic**

The economic lectures are about the economic situation of Japan, the development of this economy and the chances for the Saarland. Whether it is an indirect or direct intercultural contact depends on the nationality of the lecturers.

### 5.1.3. in the section medicine

In 1996, the German Japanese Confederation for Urology was integrated into the Society and is now active in the medicine section. There exists an important relationship between the German and Japanese medicine. During meetings of the section there is an enormous exchange of knowledge in urology medicine between the two cultures. Such a section in the German - Japanese Society is an advantage for the development of the Japanese medicine because regular meetings in this Society promote the exchange of medicine progresses in Japan or also in Germany.

### 5.1.4. in the section culture

Cultural lectures are very important to understand the differences in mentality and the ability to handle it. Therefore the Society invites speakers who report about themes like: "Image of Japan – Image of Germany" or "The Geisha – a profession". These topics could help to dispel prejudices between the two cultures. E.g. the Geisha is not the same like in the past, being Geisha was the ideal of a woman. She was taught for many years in tea-ceremonies, Ikebana and singing, so that she could entertain men in the evening or during events. As Japan was still a poor country, young girls often were sold to Geisha houses to be trained as Geishas. In contrast to the past, today the number of Geishas decreased, because Japan is not a poor country any longer, it is a rich industrialized country. That is why families are not dependent on selling their daughters to Geisha houses to get money. Nowadays the Geisha is called hostess, which is engaged in doing small talk and in flirting with customers. But that does not mean that they are like prostitutes. Today there are some women who earn extra money with being hostess. Lectures about such topic like Geisha show the development of the position of women in Japanese society and give impression of the historical and social changes in context with the industrialization. The distinction between direct or indirect intercultural meeting is like in the lectures of the other sections.

## 5.2. Cultural Events

The Society also uses as instrument for spreading knowledge of Japan in Germany by the organization of cultural events. This is the easy way to show the Japanese culture. Easy, because the visitors can experience the not-hidden parts of the Japanese directly, in contrast to the hidden parts, e.g. the Japanese mentality.

### 5.2.1. Foundation of the Japanese Gourmet Restaurant Hashimoto in Saarbrücken

One of the not hidden parts is the Japanese eating culture. The Society supported the integration of the eating culture of Japan by searching for a Japanese who wanted to open a restaurant. It was very difficult to find a person. Even the chains of restaurants like Eido and Kikkoman did not show any interest to settle down in the Saarland. Finally, Mr. Katsuyuki Hashimoto opened in 1993 a Japanese gourmet restaurant Hashimoto in the Cecilienstraße of Saarbrücken. Because of the successful development of his restaurant Mr Hashimoto opened also the Brasserie Hashimoto near the St. Johanner Markt.

### 5.2.2. Concerts and exhibitions

Other not hidden parts of culture are concerts of Japanese and exhibitions of Japanese art in Saarbrücken. The coordination is also done by the German – Japanese Society. Concerning the concerts, there has been e.g. the amateur orchestra from Akita, baroque concerts with Japanese compositions and Japanese musicians and the music days of Saarbrücken which dealt with the music between East and West. A new concert is being planned at the moment. A player of the RSO Saarbrücken who has contacts to Japan offered his support to organize a concert of Japanese in Saarbrücken. Here you can see the importance of the existence of the German-Japanese Society, because it functions as a receiver of information and as the coordinator. If the people know that there is such a Society it is easier for them to reach the implementation of their interests. And furthermore more activities are realized.

Exhibitions with different topics take place. An important factor for these events is the Society's network of institutions which offer places to carry out the exhibitions. Examples are the town hall Saarbrücken and the city gallery which are suitable places for exhibitions. This network is the precondition for the implementation of the activities and consequently for realizing the objectives of the Society.

### 5.3. Promotion of the soccer sport

Naturally there are more instruments for deepening the relationship. One instrument is the soccer sport. Soccer sport contributes to the international understanding when the football teams are from different nations.

The relationship with Japan in soccer sport started in 1991, when the governor of the province Miyagi was invited by the German - Japanese Society. The result was an invitation for a Saarland soccer coach for three months to Myagi. His mission was the training of young Japanese soccer players which should develop into professionals and soccer coaches. Thereafter many Japanese came to the Saarland for being trained. Some of them work now as successful soccer coaches in Japan. .

#### 5.3.1. Foundation of the Japanese Soccer School in Saarbrücken

This high interest of Japanese in soccer sport led to the foundation of the Japanese Soccer School in Saarbrücken initiated in 2001 by the German-Japanese Society together with 1. FC Saarbrücken. This School was integrated in the Hermann Neuberger Sport School where no-name soccer player has the opportunity to be trained as soccer coaches. The School offers not only daily training, but also German language courses for the Japanese. The soccer players also have the possibility to join soccer associations of the Saarland so that a lot of multicultural soccer associations exist. This development led to a closer relationship between the two nations, there are some Germans who discovered their interest in Japan and

who want to learn Japanese language. More than 100 Japanese have been trained in this school and three of them got professional soccer players.

“In Japan there is no football history, no football tradition.” Therefore this project has assisted in developing soccer sport in Japan.

### 5.3.2. Soccer tournament in Yokohama

Within the context of the German Year in Japan 2005/ 2006, the Society planned two events: the Saar - Days at the Keio-University and a soccer tournament in Yokohama. The second event should be the very important; it fits well in the run – up of the FiFa – Event in 2006. Some short information about the German Year in Japan: It is an important event in Japan where Germany presents itself in Japan with 1600 projects. The German Year has not finished yet, many events will follow.

Two dozen participants went to Tokyo. The participants consist of a delegation of youth soccer players from Saarland, the minister of Economic Affaires and some coaches and guides. A program was organized for them. They visited for example the German school in Yokohama, where they had the first training. Moreover the tournament between the young German soccer player and young Japanese of professional soccer clubs took place in Shinyoko – Football - Parc. Another attractive activity was the training on the top of the Adidas – Football – Tower. The German footballer reached the fourth place, the winners were the Yokohama Marinas which won as prize an invitation to the Saarland in combination with a tournament. This invitation was realized in March 2006, which was a successful week. “During this tournament, within the context of the German year in Japan, there was the meeting with the other culture and the other customs in foreground. This underlines that it was not only important to win the match, but it was also good for getting an impression of the attitude of the Japanese footballer which are really more disciplined. Perhaps the Germans could change their attitude and could be more efficient.

Illustration 1: The young kickers of the Saarland and their Japanese football friends



Source: Klein, T. (2006c), p. D4

To sum up, this meeting offers the possibility to learn from the foreign soccer players and, in general, to get to know the other culture. In this case, it was again a good idea of the German – Japanese – Society to realize their objectives in this way.

#### 5.4. Further programs for young people

In addition to the development of the soccer sport the Society offers more possibilities where the two cultures can come together, particularly occasions for young Germans and young Japanese.

##### 5.4.1. Japanese as a foreign language at the Saarland University

For creating the preconditions for a successful cultural exchange the Society took care for the introduction of Japanese as a foreign language at the Saarland University.

The Society found very quickly a Japanese who was willing to teach the Japanese language. It was an engineering director and representative of a Japanese firm who started teaching this foreign language at the faculty of economics and jurisprudence. After his returned to Japan a successor was found and until today there exists a high demand for learning this language, infact the demand is higher than available capacities. At the moment there are 60 -70 students who study the language. By learning the foreign language the highest obstacle to approach the Japanese culture is overcome.

#### 5.4.2. Cooperations between universities

A necessary and logical consequence was the introduction of cooperations between the universities of the two nations so that the students can practise their language skills in the other country. By this way personal relationships can be built up which are also essential for realizing the objectives of the Society.

The existing relationships of members of the Society can be used for the setting up of international academic contacts. For example a member of the society has become researcher in medicine at the Keio University who could help in the communication between the universities. General speaking the German Japanese Society has contributed to build up academic cooperations between the Saarland University and the Hyogo College of Medicine, the Keio University in Tokyo and the Aoyama Gakuin University in Tokyo. Before contacts between the Saarland University and the Aoyama Gakuin University were established, a cooperation between the University of Applied Sciences and the Aoyama Gakuin University already existed. The first contact between the University of Applied Sciences Saarland and the German – Japanese Society was realized in a personal initiative. A cooperation contract was signed in 2003. The contract consists of exchange of lectures, professors and students. They also decided to build up research cooperations and they agreed that the students could study free of charge at the partner university.

#### 5.4.3. Keio-Days at the Saarland University, Saar-Days at the Keio-University

The Keio-Days at the Saarland University are based on the cooperation of the Saarland University and the Keio University and also represent one of the instruments for reaching the objectives of the Society, which was the initiator and one of the organizers. Cooperations in educational and research activities started by faculty members in law fields of both universities started in 1965. That is why a contract was signed in 1988 which contents the “cooperation in education and research” and “student exchanges”. In the following ten years six students from the Saarland University and ten students from the Keio University were participants in this academic exchange program. This number highlights the attractiveness of the

exchange. "Students have returned to their home countries with increased academic knowledge, but also with valuable cross-cultural experiences."

The first Keio-Days were realized within the context of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Saarland University in 1998. Other organizers as the German – Japanese Society were the Asko Europastiftung, the ministry for education, culture and economic, the 'Vereinigung der Freunde der Universität des Saarlandes' and the former minister of economics of the Saarland Krajewski. The program contented public lectures with economic problems which were given by professors of the law faculty of the Keio University and by professors of the Saarland University of the law and economical faculty. They offered a mixture of English and German lectures, so that the young Japanese professors, who had not German language skills, also had the possibility to follow the lectures.

The return visit of this event is the Saar-Days at the Keio University, which took place in 2001 in Tokyo. These days are comparable to the Keio-Days. In 2003 the second Keio – Days at the Saarland University were realized. Consequently, within the context of the German Year in Japan 2005/ 2006, the Saar-Days in Tokyo have been repeated in 2005, too. There will be Keio-Days and Saar-Days in regular intervals of two years, which will contribute to exchange of knowledge in both countries.

#### 5.4.4. Cultural school exchange between the grammar schools

Japanese and German pupils of grammar schools will also have the possibility to get in contact with the foreign culture and to acquire intercultural competence during a cultural school exchange in Yokohama or Saarbrücken. This exchange was planned during the first week of the FiFa, as some of the Miyazawa Group of Yokohama have been in Saarbrücken. Four pupils (max. 16 years old) per year of the grammar schools Rothenbühl and Wendalinum will be the participants who will go to Yokohama for four weeks. Perhaps it will start already this year in October/ November. The return visit for Japanese in Saarbrücken will happen in the following year. Concerning the accommodation, all pupils will stay in host families or in dormitories. Further they only have to pay for the flight. This school exchange should be contributed to a good development in intercultural relationship between pupils. The advantage of this young target group could be that prejudices would be already dispelled during the youth of both cultures.

## 5.5. Journeys

The German – Japanese Society participates in journeys or organizes them which are good possibilities to have personal contact to Japanese or the inhabitants of the neighbour countries of Japan.

### 5.5.1. Delegation-Journey 2002

The Delegation – Journey was an invitation of the Japanese government. The reason for this invitation was Mr. Takanaka's enthusiasm, the Japanese Minister of Economic Affairs, about the award of the honorary doctor for Peter Müller at the Keio University. Thus he invited the prime minister Dr. Peter Müller, the minister of economic affairs Dr. Georgi and representatives of 40 companies of the Saarland to a journey to Japan. Surprisingly, the Japanese government paid the entire journey for Dr. P. Müller. This journey shows that there exists a significant importance in the relationship and that each country is very engaged for deepening the relationship.

### 5.5.2. Asian-Pacific-Discovering-Journey 2004

Another journey was the Asian-Pacific-Journey in 2004, which had as destinations the neighbour countries of Japan. The mission was to discover the efforts of Japan in these countries. For getting this information the participants spoke with companies in these countries. In this way some representatives of the economic of the Saarland got to know the economical situation of Japan and his neighbour countries at first hand, so that they could function as counsellors in economic questions concerning the Japanese economy. This is also a good example for the excellent engagement of the Society for supporting the economical relationships in a qualified way.

## 6. Conclusion and Outlook

To sum up, we can finally say that the objectives of the Society are well realized with regard to science, economy and culture. The reasons for this good result are the diversity of possibilities where both cultures can get in touch with the other culture and the high number of members with their initiative which they show.

Another reason for the success is that the Society creates the precondition, the acquirement of intercultural competence, for a successful intercultural meeting. This competence can be acquired by participating in language courses, in academic and cultural school exchanges, in journeys and in all activities which are all pushed by the Society.

In spite of these positive facts there are still potentials to improve the realisation and to contribute more to the international understanding between Japan and the Saarland. Firstly, I would propose, that the German-Japanese Society should consider the support of internships in Japan and in the Saarland as an important future task. We know that it is very difficult to get an internship in Japan because of the language skills and the different culture. In Japan every person has to begin in the lowest level in his job and it takes a long time to become the superior or to work on a more qualified level. Consequently, a student does not have the possibility to work in qualified levels during an internship. If there are cooperations between Saarland and Japanese companies, the difficulties will be reduced and there will be more chances for the students. Secondly, the Society should participate in the organization of the journey for the association of the Japanese-German societies, the counterpart of the association of the German-Japanese societies, in Germany in 2008. In this way the Saarland could be more well-known and could have advantages in the future concerning business relationships and so on. Thirdly, the Society could directly offer Japanese language courses. Naturally, it would be not easy to finance these courses, but perhaps the Society could search for sponsors who would support these courses.

I am sure that the German-Japanese Society of Saarbrücken will be successful in the future, because it has reached so much since its foundation.

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