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Boğaziçi University in Istanbul is surely a contender for the title of the world's most beautiful campus. Originally founded as the oldest American college outside of the US, this Turkish university boasts generous gardens and elegant buildings in the New England style. Here, on the eastern border of Europe, you can give lectures looking over the Bosphorus and into Asia. The newly opened metro station, allowing you to conveniently travel between the city center and the university, greets you in rainbow colours. Nowhere could have been more fitting for the 26th meeting of the Japan Anthropology Workshop (JAWS), at which Japan Anthropologists and Sociologists from all over the world discuss and explore our views on Japanese society from multiple, global perspectives. With almost one hundred participants, the JAWS conference in September 2015 was the first Japan-related conference on this scale to be held in Turkey. We were greatly privileged to receive this honour, particularly as most proponents of Japanese Studies in Turkey are involved in the study of language, literature and history, rather than Japanese society.

Under the theme of 'Nature and Technology', convened by Drs Cornelia Reiher and Cosima Wagner, we explored a wide

range of topics including organic and genetically modified food, sake breweries and soup kitchens. The disasters of 3.11 formed an important focus of our discussions and we explored how technology had both contributed to the tragedy and played a positive role in dealing with the aftermath. We examined the subject of the human body and its relationships with the robot (we even witnessed the founding of the Anthropology of Japanese Robots Association), and also discussed the gendered body, the beautiful body, the sexual body, the old body, the dying body, the healthy body, the disabled body, the enhanced body, the artificial body and the body that challenges its limits. You will find a selection of the contributions in this inaugural issue of *Global Perspectives on Japan*.

Detailed reports on the conference can be found in the *JAWS Newsletter* No. 51, 2016,¹ but I would like to express our appreciation for the warm hospitality we received from Professors Selçuk Esenbel and Erdal Küçükyağcı, as well as from Kiraz Perinçek Karavit and many other professors and the dean at Boğaziçi University, as well as Japanese Studies colleagues throughout the country. We would not have been able to organise the conference in this manner without the generous financial support of both the Japan Foundation and the Toshiba International Foundation. We will always remember the wonderful reception overlooking the Bosphorus, the enthusiasm of the students who ensured that the conference ran smoothly, and above all our last evening cruise on the Bosphorus, eating and dancing and enjoying the opportunity to talk with our international colleagues. Social networking to ensure the exchange of information and mutual support has always been an important part of JAWS and we could not have experienced better conditions for this than in Istanbul.

At this conference, we experimented with new formats. In order

¹ http://www.japananthropologyworkshop.org/?page_id=39

to connect JAWS with the local academic community, we (or more accurately Professors Esenbel and Nukhet Sirman of Boğaziçi University as well as Dr Tolga Özsen of Çanakkale University) arranged a panel that brought together Turkish anthropologists and anthropologists of Japan under the title 'Facing Crisis and Rapid Social Change in Japan and Turkey' to discuss issues of work relations and cultural events from both Turkish and Japanese perspectives.

The Japanese Studies Association of Turkey (JAD) also organised a roundtable to discuss the current state of development of Japanese Studies in Turkey. Japan has become very popular among young people in Turkey in recent years and there is increasing interest in learning the language and reading Japanese literature. There are *haiku* competitions in schools and more works of Japanese literature are being translated into Turkish. Boğaziçi University has recently established a Masters course in Asian history with a focus on Japan, but so far only Ankara University offers a PhD in Japanese Studies. What stood out from this discussion was the clear sense of energy and optimism about the future of Japanese Studies in Turkey.

For decades, for many of us involved in Japanese Studies and Japan Anthropology, Turkey has been simply a country over which we have flown on our trips between Japan and the West. Naturally, we have all been aware of the importance of Constantinople on the Silk Road, but the conference served to remind us that Istanbul –and Turkey as a modern-day country– stands at the crossroads of many cultures in our world today. Hence, the Turkish perspective is vital for our understanding of geopolitics and of Japan's role in the world. We need to stay connected and increase the flow of information and ideas, not only directly between Japan and Turkey, but also with the rest of the world.

I believe that the journal *Global Perspectives on Japan* will play a key role in this endeavour. Japanese Studies in Turkey is a small seedling that needs space and nurturing to grow and prosper. We

all hope that the Turkish Japanese Studies community will continue to enjoy the essential freedoms, as well as the financial and moral support that are necessary to pursue its goals and place a Turkish perspective on Japanese culture, society and politics on the map. JAWS members are proud to have been able to contribute to this first issue. We wish our colleagues and friends much success and look forward to future issues that will enrich our understanding of Japan.