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## **JAPAN IN THE ECONOMIC LITERATURE OF ROMANIA: G. POP TAȘCĂ, A CASE STUDY**

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### ***Abstract***

*G. POP TAȘCĂ was the Rector of the Academy of High Commercial and Industrial Studies between 1929 and 1931, the nowadays the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. His article about Japan published in the newspaper Albina Românească in 1900 is a condensed study, very well documented, regarding the most important data about the Land of the Rising Sun.*

*The purpose of this study is to underline the way in which Japan was first understood by one of the most brilliant minds in Romania and the large public.*

*From a methodological point of view, the paper follows the complexity of the economic and political analysis of the Romanian scholar, renowned for researching and promoting capitalism and cooperative system in Romania through documentation from the specialized bibliography referring to Japan. Using classical research, analysis and synthesis tools, this paper aims to radiograph the author's opinion on Japan during the Meiji period.*

*The main result of this study is the rediscovering of the considerations about Japan, after First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and in the Period of Meiji Restoration, offered to the Romanian readers by one of the most prominent intellectual of that time.*

**Keywords:** Japan; Meiji period; G. Pop Tașcă, *Albina* – revistă enciclopedică populară, 1900.

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### ***1. Japan in the eyes of a Romanian: Gheorghe Tașcă – a brief introduction about the author***

The intellectual elite was concerned on how to introduce Japan to the Romanian audience at the onset of the 20th century. Apart from the exotic image of the Land of the Rising Sun, almost impossible to be directly known due to the long distances and the lack of fast transportation in the century to come, the economic, political, strategical or cultural details were gathered or taken over by the Romanian scholars from the literature produced by those who had experienced those places first-hand.

A periodical issued by the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1888 writes about the spread of Christianity in Japan starting in 1860. On this occasion, a Romanian – Bessarabian priest by the name of Anatolie Tihaiu – was one of the members of an envoy. He was also a vicar and a missionary of the Hakodate mission station between 1872 and 1879, a professor at the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Surugadai

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Kanda section of Tokyo, the founder of the church in Osaka in 1878, the leader of the Russian Orthodox mission in Japan between 1879 and 1880, the teacher and the principal of the School of Catechists in Osaka between 1882 and 1889, who learned Japanese and already preached in that language as well as the author of a diary - *Primul jurnal misionar al cuviosului Anatolie Tihai, un apostol român pe ogorul ortodoxiei japoneze* (ルーマニアの使徒アナトリエ・ティハイの使徒日記第一宣教師日本の正教会の分野で), Episcopia de Bălți Publishing House, Kishinev, 2018, 112).

Christians entered Nippon [Japan] around 1860 mainly when the local laws authorized the Christian propaganda among the Nippon people. The Protestant Christian propaganda (reformed and Lutheran) is supported by Great Britain and partly by the German Empire; Gallia and a part of the Kingdom of Italy strongly stood up for Catholicism and the Russian Empire and Romania (in part) hold the door open for Orthodoxy. To spread Orthodoxy around Japan, the Russian church established a mission in the year of 1860 going stronger and stronger, as aided by the Russian diplomatic and consular agents in Nippon. The leader of the Orthodoxy mission in Nippon is now P. S. Nicolae Casatkin, the bishop of Reval and the vicar of the eparchy of Riga; he was awarded a title of licensee in Orthodox Theology at the Petersburg Faculty in 1860; the same year he took the monastic vows, was appointed the caretaker of the Russian consular church in Japan; in 1870, he was already an archimandrite and thus was promoted to the position of president of the Russian Orthodox mission in Nippon; in 1880, he was elected as a bishop, ordained in Petersburg. In Japan, in 1873, there were three action points of the Russian missionaries – Chacodate, Iedo and Senday [Sendai]. The mission in Chacodate [Hakodate] was under the authority of hieromonk (now archimandrite) Anatolie Tichaiu. This missionary, even though he came to Japan in January 1872, knows the language so well that he preaches in Japanese. He has two deputies as catechists from the locals. Catechism was conducted by these three people in three different places in the city. Besides the two catechists and hieromonk Anatolie [Anatoliu], there were also 6 trainees who were preparing to become catechists and they are sent to preach to people in their houses; they even preach at the mission abode outside the sermon hours.

The sermon started to be conducted in the Japanese language as early as 1873. At the same time, a choir of Orthodox Japanese singers was organised. The conductor was Jacob Tichaiu, the hieromonk Anatoliu's brother, who had been a chorister at the church cathedral in Mosqua [Moscow] and who had arrived in Nippon at the end of 1873. He is under the duty to prepare regents (conductors) for choirs elsewhere in the country.' (...)

Reverend Archimandrite Anatoliu Tichaiu's birth name was Alexandru – born on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August 1838 in the town of Balti, Basarabia, from Romanian parents; his father worked as an ecclesiarch in the church cathedral of Balti – a great man, truly honest; both parents had passed away long time ago; one of his brothers died in Kishinev many years ago. He spent his primary years at the school in Balti, followed by his admission into the Seminary in Kishinev where he graduated in 1860 magna cum laude; in the same year, he left for the Mount Athos, where he lived in the Bulgarian monastery Zograf, which received a lot of donations from Stefan the Great, Voivode of Moldavia, until 1866, when he decided to return to the Russian Empire to further his studies. He had already taken the monastic vows at the Mount Athos in the fall of 1867 and, in the same year he was admitted to the Theological Faculty in Kiev where he graduated as a candidate of Theology in June 1871. In 1872, he left for Japan, where he became one of the most active members of the Orthodox mission. From the afar land, he sent letters to his former mates, especially those of Romanian background at the Theological Faculty in Kiev, such as H. E. Silvestru Bălănescu, the current Bishop of Husi and Mr. Epure, the present director and professor at the proseminar in Kishinev, former Greek language and literature professor at the seminary in Kishinev, a good Romanian patriot, author of multiple works.

After graduating the seminary in Kishinev magna cum laude, Mr. Iacob [Jacob] Tichaiu, was a canto professor at the proseminar in Kishinev, then he joined the famous choir of the Church Cathedral in Mosqua (with the titular saint of Assumption of Mary) where the kings are crowned; from there, the Holy Synod of the Russian church in Japan sent him as a choir conductor. He married an Orthodox Japanese woman and is one of the most active members of the Orthodox church in Japan, as the Minister

of Religious Affairs in Russia acknowledged in his yearly reports about the Orthodox Church and in many Russian journals and newspapers (Samurianu, 1888:1010-1011, 1016).

Besides the Tichaiu brothers, another Romanian who connected his name to Japan was Bazil George Assan, a Romanian engineer and economist, (1 VIII 1860- 16 VI 1918) who takes a trip to Nippon in 1893 and discusses about the opportunity of the sea connections and trading. On March 6, 1899, he delivered an ample conference on “*Călătoria împrejurul pământului*” (‘A trip around the world’) at the Romanian Royal Geographical Society, established in 1875 (the previous Geography Society). The trip lasted for five months, from December 1897 until the first half of 1898. Bazil George Assan, the car enthusiast, fond of riding the hot air balloon to Antarctica and Assan House owner (The House of Scientists) becomes the first Romanian to travel around the world. His route, from west to east, had started in Constanta, going through Istanbul, Cairo, Ceylon, China, the Pacific Ocean, the United States of America and ended in Romania.

*The Romanian Encyclopedia*, volume 2, written by Corneliu Diaconovich in 1900, reserves two columns about Japan containing geographical, economic and cultural data.

The topic of Japan at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was also very inspiring to another prominent intellectual, G. Pop Tașcă, the future Rector of the Academy of Higher Level Commercial Studies. His article is called *The Empire of Japan* and was published in *Albina: Revistă enciclopedică populară*, 03, issue no. 45-46, 6-13 August 1900, p. 1207-1211<sup>2</sup>.

The destiny of G. Pop Tașcă, his pen name in 1900, or Gheorghe Tașcă, as he will be later known, started on the 30<sup>th</sup> of January 1875 in the Bălăbănești in Tutova county (currently Galați) in a modest family, with numerous siblings who were all steered towards studying. A victim of the communist regime in Romania, his life will end in Sighetul Marmației on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 1951, at the age of 76, after being arrested along with the groups of dignitaries, without any trial. He graduates the Faculty of Law in Bucharest with a thesis entitled, with a bachelor degree paper on *Evoluția proprietății rurale în România* (*The development of the rural property in Romania*). He becomes a lawyer in Ilfov county and then he will leave for Paris to prepare his PhD paper, *La question agraire. Commentaire critique de la législation rurale en Roumanie, Angleterre, Irlande, Allemagne*, which he will defend in 1907. Back to Romania, he is excited about the Politics conducted by Take Ionescu and becomes a deputy in the county of Tutova. The humour magazine *Furnica*, issue no 15 on 23 April 1920 p. 11 introduces him as the General Secretary of the Finance Minister, the mastermind of an ingenious measure to open mental institutions for the RMS<sup>3</sup> victims<sup>4</sup>. He was a close friend to Nicolae Iorga, who mentioned him in *Memorii. Agonia regală și regența (1914-1944)* vol. V, Bucharest, Editura „Națională” S. Ciornei, [1931?] and *Memorii. Încercarea guvernării peste partide (1931-1932)*, vol. VI, Bucharest: Editura „Națională” S. Ciornei, 1939.

Professor G. Tașcă is the author for the preface to Mihai A. Antonescu’s *Regimul agrar român și chestiunea optanților unguri*, Bucharest, Tipografia „România Nouă”, 1928<sup>5</sup>.

Andrei Filotti, his nephew, will talk about Gheorghe Tașcă’s family in his book *De peste mări și țări. Amintiri din viața diplomatică de odinioară*, prefaced by Filip-Lucian Iorga and an afterword by Mircea Filotti, Corint, Bucharest, 2020. Andrei Filotti is the son of Elisabeta Tașcă, who was married to Eugen Filotti and the daughter of Gheorghe Tașcă. Eugen Filotti, a career diplomat, had been the Ambassador of Romania to Sofia and Budapest during the gloomiest time in the country’s history, namely the Second World War. Andrei Filotti, a child at that time, remembers:

<sup>2</sup> Digitool Viewer (bibmet.ro) accessed on 1.09.2023.

<sup>3</sup> Administration of State Monopoly

<sup>4</sup> <http://dspace.bcuculuj.ro/handle/123456789/66094>

<sup>5</sup> <http://dspace.bcuculuj.ro/handle/123456789/82160>, accessed on 1.09.2023

To really understand how my childhood went, it deemed necessary for me to also introduce this family background. This is the reason why I chose to disentangle, in the first part, the story of the various branches in the family I ended up belonging to, where each branch is one of my grandparents'. My goal is to recount certain aspects of my paternal grandfather's family, Nicolae Filotti, and my grandmother, Aurelia Felix, to go on with *De peste mări și țări*, along with my maternal grandfather's, Gheorghe (Iorgu) Tașcă, and my grandmother's, Cordelia Demetrescu (Filotti, 2020, 10-11).

The life of the above branches in the author's family is meticulously described, with the humour, wit and the erudition of a young man, truly blessed with multiple talents.

The author, Andrei Filotti, born in 1930, resides in the United States of America and he is a famous engineer, one of the most valuable Romanian water management specialists, a former project manager of the Water Administration General Plan in Romania and the coordinator of studies for building dams, channels or flood control.

He taught the first course in water management in the Romanian higher education system at the Agronomic Institute of Bucharest. After settling down in the United States, he was appointed as the chief technical advisor of the General Secretariat to the United Nations in New York. He coordinated the technical assistance in the hydro-technical field in various developing countries and was involved in projects to fight the corruption in the governmental investments. Andrei Filotti's career proves that aristocracy and meritocracy do not exclude each other, on the contrary. The deep roots in the country's history do not save him the trouble, but highlight the obligation to honour his ancestors. His farthest documented predecessor is Knyaz Dragoș in Giulești, dating back to the end of the 13th century, followed by a long line of aristocrats from Maramures, boyars, country squires and yeomen from Moldavia descending from families such as Jora, Mișihănescu, Balaban, Tașcă. Closer to our time, Andrei Filotti is the great-grandson of Iacob Felix, an Austrian physician (1832-1905), the Head Physician of Bucharest, the Vice-president of the Romanian Academy, as well as the grandson of Anghel Demetrescu, a historian and writer (1847-1903). The great actress Maria Filotti (1883-1956) also descends from this family. Andrei Filotti's maternal grandfather, Gheorghe Tașcă (1875-1951), was the Minister of Industry and Commerce during Nicolae Iorga government (1932), the Rector of the Academy of Higher Level Commercial and Industrial Studies of Bucharest (nowadays the Bucharest University of Economic Studies), the Plenipotentiary Minister of Romania in Berlin, who died in the Sighet prison as a political detainee during the communist regime. Andrei Filotti's father, Eugen Filotti (1896 - 1975), a journalist and writer, continued the dynasty of diplomats, representing Romania at the League of Nations; later, he was a Plenipotentiary Minister of Romania in Turkey (1935 - 1936), Greece (1936 - 1938), Bulgaria (1938 - 1940) and Hungary (1941 - 1944).

Eugen Filotti rescued thousands of Jewish people in Transylvania, occupied by admiral Horthy. Between 1944 and 1945, he was the General Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, then he was in charge with drafting Romania's position during the Peace Conference in Paris. As speaking about his family, Andrei Filotti becomes our guide through the fascinating genealogical ramifications, allows us to be part of the family's respite time at the mansion in Pochidia. He manages to keep unblemished the experience of the child who lived in the whirl of history and he takes us in his trips to Istanbul, Athens, Sofia and Budapest on the trail of his father's diplomatic missions.

His observations are accurate, rich in details, and the story flows charmingly. Through his writings, we learn about the diplomacy logistics at the time, about how 'the other one' was regarded, how the diplomat children were schooled, how they played, what they were going to visit, what they celebrate or what they liked eating. The grandiose, yet sober fresco of the 'big history' intertwines with the filigree particulars of the small history of the day-to-day life, showing us the importance of truly understanding the past (Filotti, 2020: 5-7). This is the image preserved by the memoirs on Gheorghe Tașcă descendants.

The newspapers of that time (Antonovici, in *Vocea Tutovei Foaie de propășire și educație națională*, year 52, issue 31, July 1942, 3) in Bârlad mention how much Gheorghe Tașcă's father was fond of

learning – he and his son even built a school in his village. *Cum a învățat carte moș Gheorghe Tașcă din Bălăbănești* is the written evidence of an oral testimony given by Gheorghe Tașcă, regarding a history of the Romanian schools, their operation and establishment:

To bring a contribution to scraping together a history of how learning was happening around 1860, which is before the public schools were founded and also during their opening, I am hereby logging the memories of old Gheorghe Tașcă in Bălăbănești, the year when he had turned 84:

«I started with the Cyrillic books, says the old Gheorghe, with monk Gheroniie, who was not preaching in church, but teaching the boys. There were around 30 of us and the parents were paying the monk, a sovereign a year, for each of us. Then, I went to Bârlad, to Dumitrachi, a psalm reader in Sf. Dumitru church – about 20 boys were there, in his chambers. In the morning, we were chanting in unison in church with Dumitrachi and after that we would go to study. In 1860, there were around 10 schools in Bârlad, almost all affiliated with churches. It was decreed later to open national schools. This is how Primary School no. 1 in Bârlad was located where the power station of the town is nowadays. Gervescu was my second grade teacher, Montani my third and I had Leon in my fourth grade. I finished my primary years in 1864 and a year later I took up a job as a clerk at the prefect's office. In 1866, I got married to ...My Maghița [Gheorghe's wife], who was dressed like a bride, in a crinoline dress».

«The school was built around 1887 by mayor Mărdărescu and myself, when the Junimists led by Petrarche Carp were in power and Mayor Pruncu was a prefect in Bârlad. The village's money was collected on a church plate by me, as a taxman, by mayor Mărdărescu and Iancu Bălăban, the deputy mayor. Pincu, the Jew, gave us timber from the Șuțului estate. Gh. Bălăban was our primary teacher» (Antonovici, 1942, 3).

This oral testimony is connected with the thirst of knowledge of those who attended schools and, above all, with their passion to study and research at a later date. Professor Gheorghe Tașcă is a living proof of the above and his article on *Japonia* (Japan) deciphers for the readers in Romania the miracle of how Japan leapt into modernity, from the perspective of a closed-off, traditionalist and conservative country which capitalizes its potential in an excellent manner.

## **2. Japonia in G Pop Tașcă's article in *Albina: Revistă enciclopedică populară* (*The Bee*"People's Encyclopedic Magazine), 03, issue no. 45-46, 6-13 August 1900, p. 1207-1211<sup>6</sup>**

### **2.1 Japan on the political and economic maps**

The image of Japan is represented in the context where this country, along with the other European countries, was an active participant in China-Pacification campaigns (Tașcă, 1900: 1207). The author portrays this country via the geographical details. His account is among the first to coin the denominative terminology about the Japanese land in the Romanian language:

Nippon forms an empire eastward from China, spreading on 382,000 square km and a population of 43,000,000 people. It includes the most significant archipelago in Asia, with 4 large islands, such as Ieso, Nipon, Sikok [Shikoku] and KiouSiou [Kyūshū] and almost 420 islets, making up two more important groups Kourile [Kuril Islands] and Riou-Kiou [Ryūkyū]. Japan is divided into 10 regions, 46 prefectures and departments and 653 cantons. It has 48 cities, 1133 towns and 13,600 villages, except for Formosa (Tașcă, 1900:1207).

The island's soil is further described, with mentions about the volcanic origin of two thirds of the Japanese archipelago surface and the climate types changing from north to south, depending on latitude. The influence of the ocean currents (Oyashio – cold, and Kuroshio – warm) is recorded by the author, as accurate as an experienced sailor, which proves the documentation from direct and indirect sources. Even if he is a yeoman's son, Gheorghe Tașcă is eager to learn and is interested in the political economy and economic sciences (he will get his PhD in Paris in 1910, with the thesis *Les nouvelles reformes agraires en Roumanie*). It was surely fascinating how a country with only 14% farmland, shortage of raw materials and a volcanic soil always shaken by seismic waves can take the brave leap from feudalism, thus avoiding the risk of being a colony of the great powers in the century to follow. A teenage king, the 122th on the Chrysanthemum Throne became the creator of a new era, moving the

<sup>6</sup> Digitool Viewer (bibmet.ro) consulted on 1.09.2023

capital of his empire from Kyoto (in 794) to Tokyo – the eastern capital. It was Meiji Era (1868-1912). The Togugawa Shogunate era ended in November 1867, the Edo period was over, and a myriad of reforms were about to modernize Japan. These reforms were based on the five principles – all the issues are settled via public debates; all the social classes can take part in the management of the state affairs; the average people will be allowed to pursue their calling, similar with the civilian officials and military, so as to avoid any dissatisfaction; all the laws of the feudal past are abolished and the right nature laws will be complied with; knowledge will be searched for around the world.

Japan's geography, with its landscape, climate, location are described by the author with the precision of an atlas:

Two out of three parts of the surface of the islands are taken up by mountains of volcanic nature. On the Ieso<sup>7</sup> island, a great sight is Tokatsi-Take mountain, on which top Itasibe volcano is found. Southward, this island has the ports of Hakodate and Matsmai. The climate of the Nippon archipelago is temperate; since the islands are spread out, their temperature is decreasing from south to north.

Due to the two oceanic currents reaching the archipelago, there is a huge temperature gap between the meridional and the northernmost islands. The cold current, called Oyashio, going as far as to Ieso and the Kuril Islands, brings in frosty weather, while the warm current, Kuroshio, touches the meridional and oriental coasts, leading to scorching heat (Tașcă, 1900: 1207).

## **2.2. Japan agriculture and its mineral resources**

The abolition of the Han system, i.e. the transfer of the feudal lords' assets (大名 daimyō) to the emperor and the replacement of the feudal system with the prefectures, was meant to elicit taxes upon the farmland in Japan, convert the old feudal seniors into state clerks, with a certain financial independence, yet without the right of hereditary inheritance of their position.

Despite the fact that the arable land is scarce in Japan, the people's hard work, agriculture and cattle breeding are quite significant, as they grow rice, tobacco, beets, barley, millet, cotton, sugar cane and a great variety of fruit trees. [...]

The mountain slopes are covered by rich pastures called *hara* and diverse trees, such as oaks, ash-trees, lindens, etc. As minerals, there are silver, copper, iron, oil, sulphur, earth coal, etc. (Tașcă, 1900: 1207, 1208).

## **2.3. Japan city capital, form of governance and religions during Meiji Era**

Tokyo, a former town of fishermen and the capital of the Tokugawa shogunate since 1603 (the beginning of the Edo period), became the east capital during the Meiji Restoration in 1868, instead of the old imperial capital, Kyoto. As the Japanese emperor of the Meiji period had been born in this city (Edo or Yedo, as mentioned by Gheorghe Tașcă), the relocation of the imperial capital was a regarded as auspicious. Mutsuhito (睦仁, 3 Nov 1852 – 30 July 1912) and the empress Dowager Shōken (昭憲皇太后, *Shōken-kōtaigō*, 9 May 1849–9 April 1914), born Masako Ichijō (一条勝子, *Ichijō Masako*), (known as the emperess Shōken, founder of the Japanese red cross) married on 11 January 1869, when the empress was given the name of Haruko (美子) because of the imperial custom and also because of her beauty and youth. Gheorghe Tașcă does not write about the change in the empress' date of birth to honour the marriage ceremony, when she was granted the name of dowager empress, a premiere in the history of Japan. To preserve its unity, Japan developed an emperor-centred civic ideology. Even though he had an insignificant political power, he was indeed the symbol of the cultural and historic continuity and he was the Shinto religious leader of the country. Due to the association of this religion with the imperial lineage, the Japanese monarchy is one of the oldest in the world, in connection with the ancient times and a powerful symbol of the length of the national unity.

<sup>7</sup> This is the original spelling in the article.

In terms of religions in Japan, a series of Buddhist temples were destroyed during Meiji Era and a similar number of Shinto temples were erected. The Romanian writer notes:

The capital of the Japanese Empire is Tokyo, a port to the eponymous bay, in the eastern part of the Nippon islands, populated by almost 1,500,000 inhabitants; other major cities are Yokohama, Nagoya, Tottori, Matsue [Matsue], Himeji [Himeji], Sapporo, Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe, etc.

In Japan, the monarchy is hereditary and constitutional as in Romania. The emperor is called Mikado, which translates as the illustrious.

The current emperor is Mutsuhito, born in Yedo [Edo], in 1852.

The empress is Haru-Ko (the spring empress) and is born in 1850, in one of the most distinguished Japanese families.

When it comes to religion, there are two in Japan – one, the so-called national, Shinto, or the adoration of the great deified Japanese people and Buddhism (Tașcă, 1900:1208).

## **2.4 The Japanese diplomacy**

In Europe, the Japanese diplomacy passed into legend through the representatives' reactions depicted in the numerous press releases. Gheorghe Tașcă gives plenty of such examples in his article. Between 1871 and 1873, the representatives of the Japanese intellectual elite consisting of scholars and statesmen formed what was named Iwakura Embassy or Mission (岩倉使節団, Iwakura Shisetsudan), a diplomatic documentation voyage to Europe and the United States. After a long time of isolation from the world, this trip was followed by other numerous visits of personalities who brought back knowledge to this feudal state in order to speed up the modernisation process. Japan hired European advisors for two or three year-terms, without the right to permanently reside in Japan, since the Shogunate era – for instance, the German diplomat Philipp Franz von Siebold, the Dutch naval engineer Hendrik Harde for the arsenal in Nagasaki and Willem Johan Cornelis, Ridde Huijssen van Kattendijke for the Naval Training Centre in Nagasaki, the French naval engineer François Léonce Verny for the naval arsenal in Yokosuka and the British engineer Richard Henry Brunton. Many names of the Asian (Korean) cities are rendered in the Japanese pronunciation and, therefore, the author refers to the phonetic version.

Japanese are smart, cheerful, brave, and mostly patriotic. The Japanese woman is petite, yet very beautiful and pleasant.

Here is another example for their cleverness. It happened shortly before the 1867 Exhibition. A Japanese delegation had arrived in Paris to start the talks with the French government about some bridges. The main goal was reciprocation – France was to open three of its ports for trading with Japan, while Japan was to do the same. The debates started on a very careful note.

”You choose first”, said the Japanese, ”and then we will make our choice.”

The French Minister of External Affairs selected three ports - Yokohama, Jeddo [Edo] and Jan -Hang.

The Japanese delegates gave no answer and left. Shortly after, the Minister received a notice from Japan that the choice had been accepted – instead, Japan decided on the ports of Havre, Marseille and Southampton. The French diplomats laughed at their options and told the Japanese consul that Southampton is an English port and, hence, France does not have any rights upon it.

”We are aware of that”, answered the consul – ”but Jan-Hang is still a foreign port, in Korea, and Japan does not have, yet, any rights upon it”. (Tașcă, 1900: 1208).

## 2. 5 School and army in Japan during Meiji period

The moment Japan saw what happened to China during the Anglo-Chinese War or the First Opium War (1839-1842), they lived in dread that the Western barbarians would not stop with China, and their intuition was correct. When the American president Millard Fillmore wanted to open trade with Japan, sent Commandor Perry, along with four warships – the Japanese had never seen black steam warships before. To overwhelm them, the Americans installed a telegraph line between the imperial palace and Perry's ship, a railway to provide transportation to the port and they gifted the above to the hosts. Nevertheless, the Japanese were not impressed by the Trojan presents and were cautious. A few months later, admiral Perry brought along the whole Pacific fleet. The Japanese understood their message and they knew what to do in the future – at that moment, they were neither even able to defend themselves or remain isolated, otherwise they were risking to enter a war. Consequently, they opened two ports, the Americans were granted low import taxes – yet, the Japanese never forgot the humiliating terms under which they had to conclude these treaties and struggled to learn from the Westerners how to eclipse the master.

The emperor's objectives were, on the one hand, the industrialization of Japan and, on the other hand, to impose the imperial force and annihilate the feudal force of the Shoguns and samurais. The Japanese elite began to be educated in the Western spirit, importing all the scientific, technical and military achievements into the country. In order to blend the Japanese values with the Western technology, they adopted the metric system and the calendar. To start the industry, the state opened small factories, which the wealthy families took over and developed. This is how the well-known Kawasaki or Mitsubishi companies began.

The quick modernisation of Japan needed infrastructure and specialists. As a result, the educational system and the army were properly established. Japan was to become one of the most educated countries in the world, mainly the male population. The emancipation of the Western women contradicted the Japanese conservatism. All in all, they were convinced that they needed a generation of sacrifice to revive Japan.

Not enough attractive for the imperialist great powers at that time, since its resources were scarce, Japan succeeded to avoid being colonized and still received aid from those countries, managing to develop and trade good quality and inexpensive goods, thus becoming an emergent country in the international commerce.

The economic growth was closely connected to the military development of this industrious nation, with ambitious, incorruptible, skilled and intelligent leaders. In short time, Japan would prove its military prowess during conflicts with great regional powers – the 1882 crisis in Korea, the occupation of Seoul in 1894, the first Sino-Japanese War between 25 July 1894 and 17 April 1895. Equipped and trained by the Westerners, the Japanese imperial army revived the samurai fighting spirit, shaking the Asian balance with its military claims of a superpower, thanks to its admiration for the German military discipline that would be so feared in the '30's.

Since the authority of the feudal lords – daimyō and the samurai armies had been dissolved, the Japanese National Army was established in 1872, with a mandatory 3-year military service. The change in the military uniforms and, mostly, the alteration of the samurai outfit and haircut were signs of a superficial westernization, which preserved the war-like features of the country. In this respect, Gheoghe Tașcă gives a clear description of the above-mentioned features:

In terms of training, this country is a match for many in Europe; it has a University with six faculties, two Teacher's Training Colleges for boys and girls, a High School of Commerce, a school of mines, several naval and military academies, a music school, a School of Arts, a large number of primary schools in the cities and in the countryside.

The army is well organised – in 1896, there were 75 generals, 8 assimilated to the rank of general, 668 senior officers, 155 assimilated senior officers, 3,393 officers, 1,416 assimilated officers, 10,500 junior officers, 105.000

soldiers in the barracks. After the war against China (1897), the war fleet had 47 battleships with 169 regular cannons and 433 quick-trailer cannon and 28 torpedoes. These figures are already exceeded, as Japan spent large amounts of money on its fleet. In 1897, the naval army was of almost 10,000, out of which 8,000 sailors and a chief-of-staff of 19 admirals, 6 assimilated admirals – 241 senior officers, 148 assimilated senior officers, 280 officers, 347 assimilated officers (Tașcă, 1900: 1209).

**2.6 The currency: the exchange rate in lei; the income and expenditure budget in Japan during the Meiji Era**

Both the industrialisation in Japan during Meiji period and the agriculture using advanced methods helped the country become prosperous, with an incredible economic potential compared to that in the Shogunate times. Before the First World War the expansion of the financial system boosted Japan into one of the most powerful regional military forces.

The modernisation of Japan from the financial perspective was possible through the New Currency Act in 1871, which introduced the modern currency system, where yen was the equivalent of 1.5 g (0.048 troy ounces) of gold or 24.26 g (0.780 troy ounces) of silver and

decimally divided into 100 *sen* or 1,000 *Rin*. Yen replaced the previous Tokugawa coins, as well as the various paper bills (*hansatsu*) issued by the feudal lords (fiefs). The Bank of Japan was established in 1882 and



**Fig. 1 Silver Yen in 1901: 26. 96 g pure silver; 50 Yen in 1870; Bronze Rin in 1873 source: Japanese yen - Wikipedia**

received the monopoly upon the control of the money supply. Gheorghe Tașcă records the exchange rate of yen in August 1900, compared to lei:

The Japanese currency is yen = 5 lei and Sen = 5 cents; yen coins are made of gold and silver, and the silver one is worth only 2.50 lei. There are also nickel coins of 5 *sen*, in addition to the paper money, issued in Tokyo.

On 31 March 1899 the cash flow was the following:

- 21,531,000 yen in gold
- 51,000,000 yen in silver
- 17,268,000 nickel and copper coins

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Total: 89,799,000

The fiduciary circulation was of 192,740,000 Yen in banknotes, out of which 187 million yen in the Bank of Japan. Apart from these, there are enough funds with the government for the sight payment of the paper currency issued by the Bank of Japan. The income budget for 1899 – 1900 includes:

- Ordinary revenue: 178,559,000 yen
  - Extraordinary revenue: 68,394,000 yen
- Total: 246,953,000 yen

Here is the chart of the main ordinary revenue:  
Land tax: 45,874,000 yen  
Alcohol tax: 49,227,000 yen  
Consumption tax on miscellaneous .....15,706,000 yen (Tașcă, 1900: 1209).

- The customs: 16,716,000 yen
- Stamp duty: 10,058,000 yen
- Industrial exploitation of the state: 37,656,000 yen

The main extraordinary revenue sources are as follows:  
War compensation from China: 31,818,000 yen  
Public loans: 24,667,000 yen

Miscellaneous = 12,000,000 yen

The expenditure budget includes:

Ordinary expenses: 140,963,000 yen

Extraordinary expenses: 105,489,001 yen

Total 246,452,000 yen

The list of the Japan Emperor, 3,000,000. The Army – 37,000,000 for ordinary expense, 18<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> million for extraordinary expense or 140 million lei; for the naval force, the expense is between 15 and 30 million yen per year, or 168 million lei (Tașcă, 1900: 1210).

## **2.7 Written press, the cultural life in Japan during the Meiji Era**

The Japanese press was established in the 17th century in the form of loose papers sold to be read *yomiuri* (読売) or as poster-like prints with large headlines of even suggestive drawings, *kawaraban* (瓦版). They were followed by newspapers published for foreigners (Americans and Dutch) containing overseas news. The first Japanese newspaper, *Yokohama Mainichi Shinbun* (横浜毎日新聞) was printed in 1871.

In time, these mainstream papers started to be associated with some political parties and samurais were the largest reading audience. There were also smaller newspapers, for average people, with various interests. Japan managed to have a wide range of newspapers readers, a sign that the unification of Japan occurred through its press. This phenomenon stimulated the access to advanced discoveries in an attempt to make the Japanese people be treated similarly to those in the other Western states – the success would eventually come, after decades of discrimination.

As for the press, Japan was not anything less. According to the *Official Gazette*, the number of newspapers at the end of 1899 was 1675; 362 for the news, 25 for Law, Economics, Politics, 100 for Religion, 315 for Education and novels, 75 medical, 200 commerce, agriculture and industry and 30 for the official news. Only in Tokyo there were over 250 magazines and journals. The list features *La Revue française du Japon*, *The Gazette of Japan*, *Japan Directory*, *Japan Herald*, *Japan Mail and others*. Music, dancing and drama are the main entertainment forms for all the people (Tașcă, 1900: 1210).

## **3. Conclusions**

In 1912, at the emperor Meiji's death (明治 leader, illustrious commander) Japan was a centralized bureaucratic country, with an elected constitution and parliament, a well-developed system of communications and transport, a highly educated population, freed from the feudal customs and the class restrictions, an industrialized country endowed with the latest technologies, a powerful army and fleet – in short, an Asian regional superpower.

Gheorghe Tașcă writes down the data from the statistical yearbooks and concludes that Japan joined the ranks of the civilized countries in less than 50 years, more exactly 44. In 1900, Romania did not have an embassy in Japan. In 1902, the Japanese ambassador in Budapest had the initiative to open an embassy in Bucharest and Tokyo – it will become reality in 1917 when Nicolae Xenopol leaves to Tokyo to fill the position of an ambassador. He will take a strenuous trip of over a month, fell sick and passed away. The first Romanian embassy will be established in Tokyo only after the war, following the visit of some Japanese generals and the tribute given to the hero in Marasesti war, General Ieremia Grigorescu. After two main events - Prince Carol's visit to Japan in 1920 and Edgar Mavrocordat being appointed a plenipotentiary minister in Tokyo (1921), the Legation of the Japanese Empire will be opened in Bucharest on 12 March 1922. In 1900, when Gheorghe Tașcă was writing this article, he was firmly convinced that Japan, the Empire of the Rising Sun was a force hard to ignore on the international political and economic stage.

The reason I am putting all these in writing is because I would like to make people see how far forward this Asian empire has gone, a country which had been talked about for a few years and which has an important role in the Sino-European War.

Japan is a beautiful country with delightful landscape, the bright clothes on the locals, their bamboo houses, the beauty of its nature, a country that welcomed and promoted the Western civilization. As an industrial country, besides its industry of manufacturing varnishes, paper, porcelain, cotton and silk clothing, they build themselves warships and commercial vessels, telegraph lines, telephones, railways, factories of sugar, glass and many others things to be seen everywhere. This (Tașcă, 1900: 1210) flourishing industry, aided by a powerful fleet, good ports in a large number, well maintained roads and railways are all making Japan one of the greatest countries and its opinion weights a lot in the diplomatic circles (Tașcă, 1900: 1211).

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