

Speech by Christophe Marquet, Directeur du Bureau français de la Maison franco-japonaise

I wish to thank you for this award as a professor at the Department of Japanese Language and Civilization at the French National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations (INALCO). It is an absolute honor to receive such a magnificent award in this, the 150th year since Japanese-language courses began in France.

There is a long and fruitful history in France regarding research into Japanese language and culture, which started in 1858, immediately after the signing of the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between France and Japan, which was entered into between Napoleon III and the Tokugawa shogun.

Fast forward one and a half centuries to today and Japanese is one of 93 languages currently taught at INALCO, and is the language with the greatest number of students. There are over 1,000 students participating in courses from first year through to Ph.D. courses. Every year, over 500 students enroll in first year classes, and there are currently around 35 students who are preparing their Ph.D. dissertation in Japanese research as part of their Ph.D. course at the Institute.

The Department of Japanese Language and Civilization made particularly good progress at the end of the 1970s, turning out a number of excellent French researchers of Japan, and providing a high level of education with regard to Japanese language and culture to students over several generations. Many researchers, journalists, business people, and diplomats are graduates from the department.

Assistance offered by the Japan Foundation is extremely valuable to fellow teaching staff and graduates of INALCO, as well as Japanese research as a whole carried out in France. Essential programs such as assistance for teacher training and conferences for intellectual exchange, publishing assistance, and fellowships are extremely helpful in promoting Japanese education and research into Japan.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my thanks for the extensive support over many years that the Japanese Foundation has offered to the French Society for Japanese Studies (SFEJ), where Professor Macé has experience serving for many years as president, and I also have experience serving as vice-president, and where the majority of teaching staff

at INALCO are members.

A number of the teaching staff and graduates from INALCO have researched and translated works by Mr. Haruki Murakami, who also received a Japan Foundation Award this year. Mr. Murakami is currently the most read Japanese author in France.

Taking into consideration the International Book Fair held in Paris in May this year, it is clear that contemporary Japanese literature is significant in France, which I believe is thanks to the education offered by INALCO over several generations to raise translators and researchers.

Thank you very much for this opportunity today.