

EWA PAŁASZ-RUTKOWSKA
(University of Warsaw, Poland)

Polish Diaspora in Japan*

Abstract

The topic of Polish diaspora in Japan, a community with which Poles in Japan identify as Poles, recognize Polish heritage and connection to what it means to be Polish is one of important, but practically unresearched issues in Poland-Japan relations. From the 1970s a growth in Polish population in Japan can be observed. They began to organize meetings, establish formal and less official groups and have helped and maintained connections to Poland. This paper will focus on the post-war history of Polish diaspora in Japanese islands.

Keywords: Polish diaspora in Japan, Polonia, Pastoral Centre for the Polish Community in Tokyo, Polish Club in Japan, “The Polish Club in Japan Newspaper”, “POLONIA JAPONICA”

The year 2019 witnesses the 100th anniversary of Japan and Poland establishing official relations. In March 1919, after World War I, the Japanese government recognized Poland as an independent state. Such significant anniversaries are usually a call for deeper thought on the events, processes, and problems which have taken place during this time. They are a reason for analysis, summaries and drawing conclusions. Centennial anniversaries are always special in this respect. One of important issues in Poland-Japan relations, which for now remains practically unresearched and has yet to be thoughtfully described, is the topic of Polish diaspora or Polonia¹ in Japan. There have been some texts written about

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¹ Polish diaspora is often referred to in Polish language as Polonia which is the Latin name for Poland. This term shall be used throughout the text to describe Polish expats living in Japan (see more information in the text).

Poles in Japan in the period preceding the end of World War II, I myself have devoted a significant amount of publications to this subject,² however, it is not really justifiable to classify such Poles as members of Polonia, as most of them spend only a short time on Japanese isles, usually in connection to longer or shorter periods of temporary work. Only a small number stayed permanently in Japan or for some time after the work period had ended. Certainly, they did not form a community with which they would have had identified as Poles, recognized Polish heritage and connection to what it means to be Polish. From the 1970s a growth in Polish population in Japan can be observed. They began to organize meetings, establish formal and less official groups and have helped and maintained connections to Poland. This paper will focus on the post-war history of Polish diaspora in Japanese islands.

Polonia in the Policy of Polish Authorities

According to the information provided on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' webpage, after World War II "Poles living outside of Poland were mostly perceived as a threat to the political system of the Polish People's Republic and to the image of the authorities in Poland".³ This changed after the year 1989 when the question of Polonia became an important part of Poland's foreign policy and diplomatic activities. In 1990, drawing from the traditions of the Second Polish Republic (interwar Poland), patronage over Polonia and Poles living outside of Poland was taken by the Polish Senate, which also provided funds from its budget for Polish and Polonia communities around the world.⁴ However, the Senate did not provide these funds directly, but through the means of non-governmental organizations, such as, e.g. Association "Polish Community" (Polish: Stowarzyszenie "Wspólnota Polska")⁵ and many others. In the Senate, the Emigration Affairs and Contacts with Poles Abroad Committee is responsible for Polonia-related issues and in the Sejm (the lower house of the Polish parliament), the Committee on Liaison with Poles Abroad fulfils this role. In 2011, in accordance with the decision of

² See e.g.: Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska and Andrzej T. Romer, *Historia stosunków polsko-japońskich 1904-1945*, Wydawnictwo TRIO, Warszawa 2009; Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska (ed.), *W poszukiwaniu polskich grobów w Japonii. Nihon ni okeru Pōrandojin bohi no tansaku. In Search of Polish Graves in Japan*, Ministerstwo Kultury i Dziedzictwa Narodowego, Warszawa 2010; *Chopin – Polska – Japonia. Katalog wystawy z okazji 80. rocznicy nawiązania stosunków oficjalnych między Polską a Japonią oraz Roku Chopinowskiego*, Toppan Printing Co. Ltd., Tokyo 1999; Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska, *Rescuer of refugees in Tokyo. Polish Ambassador Tadeusz Romer*, "Darbai in Dienos" 67(2017), pp. 239–254.

³ Polish MFA information on Polonia, Viewed 10 February 2018, <http://www.ms.gov.pl/pl/polityka_zagraniczna/polonia/definicje_pojecia/?printMode=true>.

⁴ Polish MFA information, Viewed 10 February 2018, <http://www.ms.gov.pl/pl/polityka_zagraniczna/polonia/wladz_i_organow_panstwa_wobec_spraw_polonijnych/>.

⁵ Association "Polish Community" is a non-governmental organization, funded in 1990 by Andrzej Stelmachowski, First Marshal of the Senate of The Third Republic of Poland, and the Association's president until 2008. "Polish Community", Viewed 10 February 2018, <<http://wspolnotapolska.org.pl/stowarzyszenie/statut.php>>.

Sejm, the distribution of the funds started to be considered as one of the competences of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the implementation of policies connected to Polish diaspora abroad is an activity in the sphere of relations between Poland and citizens of other countries, and as such is within the scope of foreign policy. Since 2012 the Department for Cooperation with the Polish Diaspora has been functioning within the structure of the MFA. It mainly cooperates with the Department of Consular Affairs and territorial departments concerned with the bilateral relations between Poland and other states. The Department for Cooperation oversees conciliar officials and the execution of consular functions related to Polonia and Polish communities. This includes, e.g. determining tasks for posts, awarding and settlements of Polonia. Further details of Polish government's cooperation with Polish diaspora can be found in Government Programme of Cooperation with Polish Community Abroad for 2015–2020 which was adopted in July of 2015 by the Council of Ministers.⁶

Polish Diaspora in Japan – Overview

The Polish influx to Japan started in the 1970s. This was not caused by political or economic emigration. Instead, it was trained experts in various fields, artists, and spouses who came to Japan for longer or shorter periods. At that time also, the number of scholarship holders in public and later also private universities and research institutions in Japan began to grow. In recent years, also employees of Japanese companies, which started investing in Poland and Poles taking part in Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme which aims at developing international contacts on the level of local communities have been arriving in Japan for periods of around a year. The number of Poles in Japan has also increased after, in 2015, Polish and Japanese governments signed an agreement on the “Working Holiday Scheme” programme, intended to make it possible for young people to obtain a special visa which enables them to engage in employment as an incidental activity during their stay in Japan which is mainly the purpose of holiday for a period no longer than one year.⁷ In this study, I have not classified Poles who stay in Japan for a period of 90 days or fewer for tourism, commerce or conferences and do not require a visa, as stipulated by a bilateral agreement on partial visa abolishment from 1999, as members of Polonia.

According to the statistical data from the Japanese Ministry of Justice, in 2017 there were 1,459 Polish citizens, 762 of them female and 697 male, who were staying in Japan permanently or temporarily.⁸ Poles lived in all the prefectures, with the highest number

⁶ Polish MFA website, Viewed 12 February 2018, <<http://www.msz.gov.pl/resource/70a7021e-304c-4075-a812-18e5b3410966:JCR>>.

⁷ Japanese MFA website, Viewed 12 February 2018, <http://www.mofa.go.jp/j_info/visit/w_holiday/index.html>.

⁸ Based on data at the Japanese Ministry of Justice's website, excel spreadsheets attachments 1, 2 and 3, Viewed 11 February 2018, <<https://www.e-stat.go.jp/stat-search/files?page=1&layout=datalist&lid=000001196143>>. The date does not incorporate Poles staying in Japan without visa – for a period shorter than 90 days.

in Tokyo Metropolis – 468 and in neighbouring prefectures: Kanagawa – 136, Saitama – 84 and Chiba – 72, and also in Hokkaido – 74 persons. Other larger concentrations of Poles include Nagasaki Prefecture – 80, Osaka City area – 80, 80, prefectures: Aichi – 68, Hyōgo – 55 and Fukuoka – 39, Kyoto city region – 33 and Okinawa – 25 persons. Women constitute the majority of Poles living in Japan and often family ties are the reason for their stay. Children of Polish-Japanese parents not always maintain close contacts with Poland but some of them choose to complete their higher education in Poland. This, according to the webpage of Consular Section of Embassy of the Republic of Poland in Tokyo, is a result of Japanese legislation, as people above the age of 20 are not allowed to have dual citizenship.⁹ Framework for consular relations between Poland and Japan is defined the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963 signed by both countries.¹⁰

Polish Consulate in Tokyo and the Polish Diaspora

The issue of Polish diaspora in Japan lies within the scope of Consular Section of the Polish Embassy. In a conversation on June 12, 2013 in Tokyo, Polish Consul (2010–2017) Dominika Jakimowicz-Giordano told me about the work in this area and stresses that it was a very important part of her duties:

“We take care of Polish citizens, register \ births of children, we act as proxies, if need be, between Poles living here and authorities in Poland. We run many different legal cases – register marriages, officiate marriages of Polish citizens in Japan, we help in case of a death, and take care of resettlements (...). We organize events for Polonia, in order for the contact between Poles in Japan and the Embassy to be a good one, so that Poles in Japan do not forget about Poland, Polish culture, traditions and customs. We organize film events and I also started meetings with Polonia. The meetings do not take place too often (...), however, we try to organize them at least twice a year. And during such meetings we talk about issues which are important for Poles in Japan. About what is happening, about their problems, about changes they would like to see, about the events they would like to see and take part in. There is also one very important aspect of Consul’s work which involves Poles – Polish prisoners in Japan. (...) It is a very distant country which is culturally very different from Poland. Of course, these people have broken the law, but they are in this position for various reasons, sometimes very tragic ones. The Consul is the only person whom they can contact in Polish”.

⁹ Embassy of Poland in Tokyo website, Viewed 11 February 2018, http://www.tokio.msz.gov.pl/pl/informacje_konsularne/informacje_polonijne/polonia_w_japonii/.

¹⁰ Polish MFA website, Viewed 11 February 2018, http://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/polityka_zagraniczna/prawo_miedzynarodowe/umowy_miedzynarodowe/konwencja_wiedenska_o_stosunkach_konsularnych.

Most of Poles living in Japan are spouses of Japanese citizens and also full-time employees, contract workers, students and academic teachers. Most of the people with family ties in Japan work in various fields. Only a few women are not employed. All, both those who permanently live in Japan and those who only arrived in Japan for a temporary stay, can register in the Embassy, although it is not compulsory. According to Consul Jakimowicz-Giordano, in 2012 there were 350 persons who had registered, most of them from Tokyo. Registration enables easy access to information about events organized by the Embassy and in cases of emergency situations, such as earthquakes, typhoons, etc. She said:

“I was here during the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake in March. This was an unexampled earthquake, followed by a tsunami and the nuclear accidents, including Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. Three tragedies. The framework of Consul’s actions in such cases is, in the first place, determining what occurred and where, sending information to the country and locating people from the consular list in the affected area and contacting them, the next step is establishing a telephone hotline for people from Japan and Poland which works 24/7. We organize duty hours in the Embassy, which for a time becomes one big consulate, these are at such times top priority tasks. This was a new and very difficult experience. It is impossible to anticipate what might happen in a situation like that. There is no internet connection, the phone lines are down, so what means of contact do we have? How can we evacuate people? Who will fetch those who want to leave?”¹¹

Janusz Korczak Polonia School (Szkoła Polonijna im. Janusza Korczaka) has been operating under the aegis of the Polish Embassy since 2008. Its aim is to “teach Polish language, and promote Polish culture and traditions”.¹² Not only children of Polish descent can be students at the school, but anyone who wants to learn there. The school is supervised by the Polish Consul who also supports the school organizationally and financially. The school provides free schoolbooks. As Consul Jakimowicz-Giordano told me, the Embassy covers the costs of the school’s functioning, takes care of the location of the school, funds awards at the end of the school year, co-organizes events for the children, the start and end of the school year ceremonies, carnival balls and others. Children attending school are between the ages of 5 and 14. The lessons take place twice a month on Saturdays between 2 pm and 5 pm in Nakameguro district. There is also a Polonia Library at the Embassy.

¹¹ From the conversation with the author, 12 June 2013, Tokyo.

¹² Embassy of Poland website, Viewed 11 February 2018, <http://tokio.msz.gov.pl/pl/informacje_konsularne/informacje_polonijne/szkola_polonijna_w_tokio/>.

Polonia Organizations and Groups

Masses in Polish and Pastoral Centre for the Polish Community in Tokyo

First unsuccessful attempts at organizing the Polish community took place at the end of 1970s.¹³ One of the insurmountable obstacles was the lack of support from the authorities of Polish People's Republic and Embassy staff. Some of the Poles in Tokyo met in a Dominican church in Shibuya, where, in 1977, thanks to Father Julian Różycki, first mass in Polish was held.¹⁴ This is also where guests from Poland visiting Japan were invited (including President Lech Wałęsa in 1981 and Tadeusz Mazowiecki – the first non-communist post-war prime minister in Poland), film screenings, lectures, talks and other events were organized. After Father Julian left Tokyo in 1982, his duties were taken on by another member of the Dominican order – Rev. Czesław Forys, and later by Rev. Tadeusz Obłąk, a Jesuit, academic scholar and canon law professor at Sophia University (Jōchi Daigaku), which was founded in 1913 by German Jesuits (Yotsuya neighbourhood). As Rev. Obłąk was also helping at the chaplaincy in St. Ignatius Church in the University's proximity, this is where masses for Poles started to be held. In March 1999, thanks to his efforts, Pastoral Centre for the Polish Community in Tokyo was established and Rev. Obłąk became its first head. This function was later taken up by Rev. Paweł Jarosław Janociński who has been holding it to this day. He conducts typical ministry work for the Polish community (hears confessions, dispenses sacraments such as marriage, baptism, holy communion and confirmation), conducts masses in St. Ignatius Church (once a month, on the first Sunday of the month), co-organizes meetings for the Polish community, usually during Easter and Christmas time.

Polish Club in Japan

Thanks to the changes in Political system and also a larger number of Poles in Japan, in September 1998 it was possible to establish the Polish Club in Japan (Klub Polski w Japonii),¹⁵ which functions independently of meetings at the St. Ignatius Church. The initiative was supported by Ambassador Jerzy Pomianowski (1997–2002) and the head of the Consular Section – Czesław Kulesza.

The Club's activities were based on the Club's statue. The Club was registered as a Polonia organization in the Association "Polish Community". Its aims were to help Poles living in Japan in "providing better contact with Polish culture, developing contacts

¹³ See: Renata Sowińska-Mitsui, *Polacy w Japonii*, "Wspólnota Polska" 1999, 10, pp. 16–19.

¹⁴ For more details on Polish missionaries in Japan see: Ewa Pałasz-Rutkowska, *Działalność polskich misji zakonnych w Japonii*, "Przegląd Orientalistyczny" 2017, 3–4, pp. 198–215.

¹⁵ Details can be found in: *Informacja o powstaniu Klubu Polskiego w Japonii*, a leaflet from the author's archive; *15 lat działalności dziennikarskiej i polonijnej „Gazety Polskiej w Japonii”*, "POLONIA JAPONICA", Viewed 11 February 2018, <<http://poloniajaponica.jp/o-nas>>; also based on the author's conversation with Renata Sowińska-Mitsui, 14 March 2013, Tokyo.

between Poles, assimilation within the Japanese society, and popularizing knowledge about Poland, its culture and language”.¹⁶ Elżbieta Kostowska-Watanabe, a sociologist and academic professor, became the Club’s first chair. Regular meetings started to be held jointly with meetings with invited guests, lectures, fairs, events for children, New Year’s Eve and carnival balls, etc. The Club had a website which could be found under the address japonia.klubpolski.org and it was the first internet website of Polonia in Japan. Artist Emilia Okuyama was responsible for its design.

The “Gazeta Klubu Polskiego w Japonii” (“The Polish Club in Japan Newspaper”), the source of information for all Poles and the only magazine in Polish, was published every two months. The first issue was published in June 1998 and the first editor-in-chief was Renata Sowińska-Mitsui, a Japanese scholar and academic teacher. After almost two years Elżbieta Kostowska-Watanabe took that position. Since 2003 the editor-in-chief has changed continuously, however, the group creating the Paper, i.e. the first editor-in-chief, Dorota Hałasa, Ewa Maria Kido, Ewa Odagiri, Judyta Yamamoto and Krzysztof Strebeyko, remained. The “Gazeta Klubu Polskiego w Japonii” featured regular columns (e.g. Poles in Japan, consular information, cultural events, “Japan survival”, “So many countries, so many customs”, the Club’s activities) and occasional articles and columns. The Club was awarded a Bronze Statuette from the Polonia Columnist Club of the Polish Journalists Association for the paper’s editorship (31 March 2004).

Although surely, they do not represent the Polish diaspora in Japan in its entirety, the results of a survey conducted amongst the Club’s members, published and described in the Newspaper in issue 5/1999¹⁷ can be an indicator of the overall situation of the Poles in Japan at the end of the 20th century, and as such are noteworthy.

The survey had 52 members of the Polish Club as respondents, at the time the Club had 80 members. The majority of the Polish diaspora members were women aged 31–50. 46 of the respondents were university graduates, however, most of them were not using that potential. Only six persons, all of them men, had full employment. Only one person had their own company, which could be a result of the specificity of the Japanese market at the time and also from the fact that most Polonia members were women who were married to Japanese men. Half of the respondents came to Japan as a result of marriage with a Japanese person. Only 15 persons were fluent in Japanese, only 12 could write in that language, and over 40 could speak it. Only 22 maintained closer relations with Japanese which stemmed from culture, custom, and emotional barriers. According to the survey, the respondents did not like Japanese extensive and very formal politeness and hostility towards foreigners, towards “others”. They also criticized Japanese personality, very different from Polish character; the fact that the Japanese do not express emotions and opinions, their reserve, lack of deeper interpersonal ties, indifference and callousness, passiveness, hypocrisy, and dishonesty. The respondents also criticized: onerous red tape in rules, groupism, persecution of individualism, Japanese devotion to work, late returns

¹⁶ Sowińska-Mitsui, *Polacy w Japonii*, p. 19.

¹⁷ Elżbieta Watanabe, *Polacy w Japonii*, “Gazeta Klubu Polskiego w Japonii” 1999, 5, pp. 3–6.

home from work and lack of holidays, and the monotony of life. Being a foreigner for them meant alienation and impossibility of assimilation. They were annoyed by crowds and noise on the street and small apartments without central heating. Despite this, the respondents also found many advantages to living in Japan. This was connected to trouble-free and peaceful everyday life, e.g. politeness in services, organization, order and tidiness, public safety, integrity, and kindness. Healthy and tasty Japanese cuisine was also important, however, traditional Japanese culture did not have many fans among the respondents. Also, characteristics which were considered to be scarce in Poland were praised, e.g. discipline, conscientiousness, responsibility, perseverance, lack of complaining, reliability and diligence. Interestingly, some of these features were criticized earlier, which means that the way they were perceived was often connected to specific, subjective situations.

According to the survey's results, Poles visited Poland; 20 respondents annually and 15 every two or three years. Their returns to Japan also fuelled further comparisons, reflections and reevaluation of their opinions. The Japanese experience meant that many saw negative characteristics in Poland, such as: boorishness, rudeness, aggression, slyness, dishonesty, and also intolerance, lack of good organization and safety. The respondents also valued Polish kindness, candour, cordiality, hospitality, family life, get-togethers, they marvelled at Polish landscapes, culture and architecture. The results of this survey are without any doubt an interesting contribution to further cross-cultural research. It is a pity, however, that a similar survey has not been conducted in recent years, as many things have changed in the 21st century.

In 1999, as the Club's initiative, the Polish Club Fund "Polonia" (Fundusz KP "Polonia") was created where voluntary donations could be contributed.¹⁸ The funds collected, small sums, were used to help compatriots in need after consultations with the Polish Consul in Tokyo, who has the best knowledge of the situations of Poles in Japan.

Unfortunately, in the spring of 2006 the decision to dissolve the Polish Club in Japan was made. Since the number of members was declining, the conclusion was that there is no need for a Polonia organization. Renata Sowińska-Mitsui told me during our meeting on March 4, 2013 in Tokyo:

"Now I know that unification efforts lead to divisions. (...) This is why I pondered for a long time if less formal, social ties, where only personal preferences are at play, are not a better glue for organization and group activism than writing statutes and assigning functions. Who is the chair and who is the deputy, who can write on their business card the function they hold and what can they include in their résumé – this breeds conflict. (...) I also know that this next generation, following ours, young mothers with children, do seek contact with other Poles, they look for support, need unity and information exchange".

¹⁸ *Fundusz KP „Polonia”, „Gazeta Klubu Polskiego w Japonii” 1999, 7, p. 30.*

The hitherto editorial team decided to continue to publish the Polonia paper, however, under a different name – the “Gazeta Polska w Japonii” (“The Polish Newspaper in Japan”) from the second issue (47th) of 2006 for April and May. The Paper was discontinued after two years, with the last issue being 4 (61) November, December 2008 and January 2009. Times and Polonia had changed and because of that it was no longer possible to edit and publish the Paper in print by basing solely on community work.

“During these ten years of the Paper being published, articles about Japan from a wide perspective were featured, they tackled Japanese politics, economy, everyday life, pop culture, architecture, art, aesthetics, literature, Japanese companies and Poles hired in them, issues connected with women, youth, life of Poles in Japan and other countries, Japanese history, Japan-Polish relations, etc. Also, articles about important events in the country were published (...), information about the activities of the Polish Club in Japan. The paper also featured all the important events in the Polish Embassy in Tokyo and often published interviews with important Embassy guests from the fields of politics, economy, culture and art (...). Most of the people involved in the Paper were connected to Japan because of their education, residence or interests. During the ten years, the “Gazeta Polska w Japonii” reached Poles all over Japan and also in other countries; it was delivered to 250 persons and institutions”.¹⁹

Ewa Maria Kido and Renata Mitsui, the editors of the “Gazeta Polska w Japonii” decided to continue their community work and from 2008 to 2010 they edited the first internet newspaper in the history of Japanese Polonia. The paper had the same title (*gazeta.jp*) and featured both archive materials and new articles connected with the life of Poles in Japan. In 2010 some of their previous team-mates joined in and a new website was created the “e-Gazeta Polska w Japonii” (“Polish e-paper in Japan”) and a corresponding Facebook fan page was set up. The editorial team undertook activities in order to improve the situation of Poles in Japan, e.g. by a dialogue with the Polish Embassy in Tokyo and cooperating with local Polonia.

Another major split in the team’s opinions on the aims of the Paper led to its discontinuation in 2012. Experienced editors from the “Gazeta Polska w Japonii”, who were active in the Club created another website “*gazeta.jp POLONIA JAPONICA*” (<http://www.polonia-jp.jp/> and later <http://poloniajaponica.jp>) which exists until today. This page fulfils the same aims as the “Gazeta Polska w Japonii” in its previous instalments. It is a platform for social dialogue. The editorial team strives to increase the knowledge on the needs of Polish diaspora in Japan, initiates activities for Poles in Japan, in order to help them solve social and life problems. Informs about events connected to Poland. The other Polonia website in Japan is “*Polonia.jp*” (<http://www.polonia.jp/>), created by Fabiola

¹⁹ 15 lat działalności dziennikarskiej i polonijnej.

Tsugami and other authors. It provides information on political and cultural events in Japan, also connected to Polish culture and history in Japan [polonika]. It also has some space for Polonia, however, it is not as active as the above mentioned site. It seems that social media portals have now the largest role in providing Poles in Japan with information.

It is also noteworthy the staff of the “gazeta.jp POLONIA JAPONICA” initiated and is directly involved in the creation of bilateral agreement on social security between Poland and Japan. They were supported by Consul Jakimowicz-Giordano. In July 2012, a petition was sent to many government institutions calling for action in order to sign such an agreement.²⁰ Renata Mitsui told me:

“The tragedy connected with the March 2011 earthquake and tsunami in northern Japan made all people in Japan, also Poles, more aware of the unpredictability of fate. Many people had difficulties in coping with this situation and started to think more about the future (...) Polonia does not constitute a major economic or political force, there are not many people who are employed. We do not have influential businesspeople and politicians in our midst. More than 70 people have signed the petition. The aim is to send a signal to the authorities about Polonia’s existence and the fact that we are also interested in this issue.”

In May 2013, Prime Minister Donald Tusk signed a motion to begin negotiations and the Polish project was sent to the Embassy of Japan in Poland. The talks were held during the meeting of Prime Minister Tusk and Prime Minister Abe Shinzō, who was visiting Warsaw in June 2013. During the meeting with the representatives of the editorial team in June 2015, Ambassador Cyryl Kozaczewski (2012–2016) emphasized that “the agreement is one of priority issues and also an important indicator of issues concerning Poland in contacts with Japan”.²¹ Since June 2013 the negotiations were also held during other high-level meetings. However, the Ambassador remained sceptical:

“After analysis of the situation, after consultations with parties in Japan and Japanese parties in Poland and also in the light of the fact that Japan is also during negotiations with other countries and has specified priorities in the area, in the case of Poland there is not enough arguments that would enable to engage in the negotiations on a level desired by the Polish side.”

According to the information I obtained in the Consular Section of the Polish Embassy in Tokyo in February 2018, the case of the agreement has not advanced despite the commitment of the Polish side.

²⁰ Ewa Maria Kido, *Postęp w ważnych kwestiach polonijnych - spotkanie robocze redakcji z Ambasadorem RP w Japonii Cyrylem Kozaczewskim*, “POLONIA JAPONICA”, Viewed 12 February 2018, <<http://poloniajaponica.jp/sprawy-polonii/item/1321-postep-w-waznych-kwestiach-polonii-jnych-spotkanie-robocze-z-ambasadorem-rp-w-japonii-cyrylem-kozaczewskim>>.

²¹ Ibidem.

Other Polonia Organizations and Groups

There are a few small Polish diaspora organizations and groups operating in Japan.²² In June 2000, there was already a rift in the Polish Club in Japan. Some of its ex-members established Polonia TAMA Forum in Japan (Forum Polonijne TAMA w Japonii), “associating Poles, who strive towards maintaining ties with the homeland”.²³ The Forum also created Strona Polska w Japonii (Polish Site in Japan – <http://klikdotsystems.jp/stronapolska>) and focused mainly on the promotion of Polish culture, organization of events for the Japanese, e.g. lecture about Chopin, Poland Culture days. After the 2011 earthquake, Consul Jakimowicz-Giordano received information that almost all members active in the Forum are leaving the organization. The next Consul, Łukasz Osmycki (2017–2018), informed me in January 2018 that the TAMA Forum ceased to exist.

In 2012 Polonia parents and Polish citizens temporarily living in Japan created Polonia Association Together (Stowarzyszenie Polonijne Razem), whose aim is to “cultivate and promote Polish language, culture, traditions and customs among Polonia in Japan, Polish-Japanese integration and promote the positive image of Poland in the local society”.²⁴ In 2018 Karolina Chrzęstek-Tanno was the president of the Association. Also, a Polonia Saturday School (Polonijna Szkoła Sobotnia), which divided from the school organized by the Embassy, functions at the Association together with a Child Day-care. The classes are held on Saturdays, two to three times a month, in a hall next to the Franciscan Chapel Centre in Roppongi, Tokyo.

The “Polonia Project” (“Projekt Polonia”), an important initiative pertaining to the collection and then publishing of information on Poles in Japan was undertaken by the above mentioned editorial team of “POLONIA JAPONICA” portal. Interesting data was provided thanks to a meeting of the editorial team representatives with a group of eight persons who had been living in Japan from two to 32 years in the Kansai region (which includes seven prefectures and is centred around Kobe, Osaka, and Kyoto) and was held in July 2017.²⁵ In 2016, there were 200 Poles living there. Half of them came to Japan because of marriage and the other half because of work in Japanese companies, Japanese government scholarships, tourism and motivation to get to know Japan better, and the treatment of an ill daughter. One of this number is a Polish Japanese Studies graduate, and she became an expert in quality management system in the ISO regimes for a Japanese company. Two men set up their companies and the scope of their activities connects Poland and Japan. Two persons arrived from England and Ireland and thanks

²² See e.g.: Embassy of Poland website, Viewed 15 February 2018, <http://www.tokio.msz.gov.pl/pl/informacje_konsularne/informacje_polonijne/organizacje_polonijne/>.

²³ TAMA Forum website, Viewed 12 February 2018, <<http://klikdotsystems.jp/stronapolska/files/polonia.html>>.

²⁴ Viewed 12 February 2018, <<http://www.facebook.com/razemwjaponii>> and http://tokio.msz.gov.pl/pl/informacje_konsularne/informacje_polonijne/szkola_polonijna_w_tokio/.

²⁵ Renata Mitsui, Ewa Maria Kido, Emilia Okuyama, *Polacy w Kansai. Spotkanie z Polonią w Osace*, “POLONIA JAPONICA”, Viewed 12 February 2018, <<http://poloniajaponica.jp/jzyk-japonski-2/item/1495-polacy-w-kansai-spotkanie-z-polonia-w-osace>>.

to their command of English they are the teachers of this language, despite the fact that they are political science and law school graduates. Three persons are connected with art and design, two design clothes, packaging and commercials and the other works at a Japanese university and teaches design there.

The benefits of living in Kansai, rather than in Tokyo and the Kantō region (which includes Tokyo Metropolis and six prefectures around Tokyo), are lower costs of living, more comfortable commute and smaller crowds. The main disadvantage is the larger distance from the Embassy of Poland and its Consular Section, which is the only place for settling passport issues, which are troublesome and costly. There are no Polonia organizations in Kansai and Poles meet in social groups, fixed circles and do not feel the need for institutionalized Polish integration. “Spontaneous, casual meetings, where one can just freely talk in Polish are better than organized structure and holding meetings”. The members of the Polish community sometimes take part in events organized by the Japan-Poland Association (Stowarzyszenie Japonia-Polska or Nippō Kyōkai).²⁶ There is also a “Kansai Polonia” group that can be found on Facebook.²⁷

Poles also live on the northernmost Japanese island of Hokkaido. For many years there has been an informal Polonia group, which consists of 50–60 persons. Its coordinator is Rafał Rzepka, assistant professor at Hokkaido University (Hokkaidō Daigaku), where he conducts research on Artificial Intelligence.²⁸ Poles meet regularly in Sapporo, usually on a weekly basis, there are also events that are organized, some of which are regular, such as the Polish tent during Hokkaido University’s Festival, May holiday break together with cherry blossom viewing, Christmas Eve and Easter Meetings. The most important aspect is maintaining contacts with compatriots and, indirectly, with Poland, but also helping those who do not know Japanese and have problems with taking care of administrative issues. The number of Poles in Hokkaido is much smaller than in Kantō or Kansai and because of that, there is less discord. The group communicated by the means of a mailing list, to which any Pole “coming to Japan for longer than two-three months” can sign up. Rafał Rzepka also runs a website.²⁹ For years now, Hokkaido Polonia maintains close contacts and cooperates with Hokkaido–Poland Cultural Association (Hokkaidō Pōrando Bunka Kyōkai),³⁰ which was established in 1987, e.g. they help in the organization of the Polish film festival and through the Association they have contacts with other Japanese organizations, such as, e.g. film, Chopin or folk-dance aficionado groups.

The group of Poles living in Okinawa Prefecture, the southernmost part of Japan, is not as organized and is far smaller, with only 25 persons. Andrzej Zacharski, who has

²⁶ Japan-Poland Association website, Viewed 12 February 2018, <<http://www.eonet.ne.jp/~nippo-kansai/index.html>>.

²⁷ <<https://www.facebook.com/groups/886944601432552/>>.

²⁸ Ewa Maria Kido, *Rozmowa z Rafałem Rzepką – „Mój dom na Hokkaido”*, “POLONICA JAPONICA”, Viewed 15 February 2018, <<http://polonijaponica.jp/jezyk-japonski-2/item/1106-rozmowa-z-rafalem-rzepka-moj-dom-na-hokkaido>>.

²⁹ “Wiadomości”, Viewed 14 February 2018, <<http://arakilab.media.eng.hokudai.ac.jp/~kabura/PolacySapporo>>.

³⁰ Association website, Viewed 14 February 2018, <<http://hokkaido-poland.com>>.

been living there for approximately 10 years, told me during a meeting in Itoman city, near Naha on November 19, 2017 that Poles in Okinawa meet only very rarely and organize, e.g. Christmas Eve meetings and Easter Holidays. Zacharski has finished PhD studies in the University of the Ryukyus (Ryūkyū Daigaku) and was preparing his dissertation on the subject of philosophy of karate, a martial art he has been practicing for many years. There were also five other Polish doctoral students there. A few Poles worked in Okinawa Institute of Science and Technology Graduate University (Okinawa Kagaku Gijutsu Daigakuin Daigaku), one Polish woman was teaching English in a middle school and there were also spouses of Japanese citizens. Earlier, there were also Poles working on contracts in American army bases. In 2012 and 2013 Ambassador Cyryl Kozaczewski visited the Okinawan Polonia. In March 2013, thanks to the Polish Embassy's initiative, the Polish House in Urasoe, on Okinawa island, was opened, its main objective is to "deepen Polish-Japanese cooperation in the area of economic, cultural and tourism exchange".³¹

Conclusion

From the research I have conducted, it is difficult to draw general conclusions pertaining to the situation of the entire Polish diaspora in Japan. The situation and the makeup of Poles living in Japan has been changing with years. Poles live in all Japanese prefectures, in varying conditions, and have different aims. It is difficult to reach those who live dispersion, in lesser-known and rarely visited regions of Japan. Those who organize into groups, usually not formal ones, tend to reside in places where Poles living in Japan are more numerous (e.g. Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, Kyoto). Also, a leader figure is important during such organizations' formation (e.g. Hokkaido). Polonia in Japan consists of the first-generation Poles, who came to Japan for various reasons (usually marriage, work or studies). So, in order to describe them, only the basic definition of "Polonia", also adopted by the Polish MFA, can be used. According to this definition the Latin word "Polonia", which denotes Poland, is used to describe the whole Polish diaspora.³² The narrower definition of "Polonia" is not applicable in this context. It denotes those who were born outside of Poland but acknowledge their Polish ancestry and ties to Poland. Well-known cases of "Polonia" in this meaning are Polonias, Polish communities, in the United States, Canada or France. They are dominated by the generations of grandchildren and great-grandchildren of those who left Poland many years ago. This kind of Polonia does not yet exist in Japan.

³¹ Embassy of Poland website, Viewed 25 February 2018, <http://tokio.msz.gov.pl/en/news/polish_house_in_okinawa?printMode=true>.

³² Polish MFA website, Viewed 22 February 2018, <http://www.msz.gov.pl/pl/polityka_zagraniczna/polonia/definicje_pojecia/?printMode=true>.