

BOOK REVIEW

Editors' note: Although *Japanese Psychotherapies: Silence and Body-Mind Interconnectedness in Morita, Naikan and Dohsa-hou* was published back in 2017, it remains a valuable contribution to the topic of medical pluralism and cross-cultural psychotherapy studies.

The book's quiet depth and nuanced insight resonate with the broader goals of this issue: to foreground diverse therapeutic traditions and plural approaches to healing. We are pleased to revisit this work, which connects Eastern and Western traditions through careful scholarship and embodied experience.

The book review featured here was originally published in Japanese by Rev. Mari Sengoku – a scholar, practitioner, and Jodo Shin Buddhist minister. To accompany the reflection on the book's significance this review provides, we share a mixed-media painting by the book's author, Velizara Chervenкова. The three Japanese cranes not only might evoke associations with the three therapies central to the book, but they can also serve as a visual metaphor for the gentle interweaving of movement, silence, and healing explored within its pages.

The heartfelt review is complemented by a brief commentary on the book's core subject by Osamu Imura, Professor Emeritus of Psychology at Osaka University (Japan).

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The Healing Power of *Ma* and the Mind-Body Connection in Japanese Psychotherapies – Focusing on Morita Therapy, Naikan Therapy and Dohsa-hou

Abstract: *This review commends Velizara Chervenкова's scholarly work for its thorough and nuanced exploration of three Japanese psychotherapies: Morita Therapy, Naikan Therapy and Dohsa-hou within their cultural and philosophical contexts. The book effectively elucidates the role of silence (ma) and mind-body interconnectedness as core therapeutic mechanisms, and demonstrates their applicability beyond Japanese populations through case studies and cross-cultural analysis. Posi-*

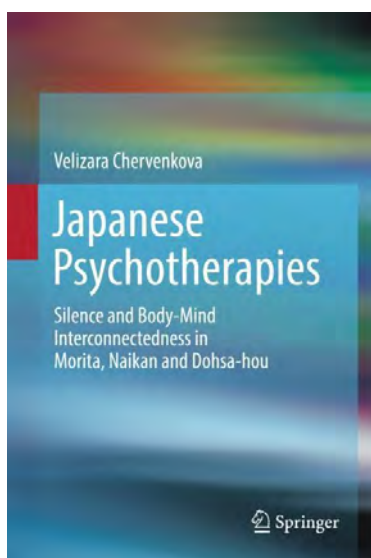
tioned as a valuable successor to earlier foundational texts, the work contributes significantly to the global understanding and dissemination of Japanese psychotherapies.

Keywords: *Japanese psychotherapies; Morita Therapy; Naikan Therapy; Dohsa-hou; cross-cultural analysis.*

Chervenkova, V. (2017). *Japanese Psychotherapies: Silence and Body-Mind Interconnectedness in Morita, Naikan and Dohsa-hou.* Singapore: Springer Nature, eBook ISBN 978-981-10-3126-7, XX & 275 p.

<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-981-10-3126-7>

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This book is a scholarly English-language work written to introduce three psychotherapies developed in Japan – Morita Therapy, Naikan Therapy, and Dohsa-hou – to clinicians and clients outside of Japan. Its original English title is *Japanese Psychotherapies: Silence and Body-Mind Interconnectedness in Morita, Naikan and Dohsa-hou*. The author has studied clinical psychology, counseling, and Japanese in Bulgaria, and earned her PhD at Osaka University’s Graduate School of Human Sciences with a dissertation on this theme. She has also presented at the Japan Naikan Association’s academic conferences, and may already be familiar to many of the association’s members.

ences, and may already be familiar to many of the association’s members.

As the reviewer who wrote the preface for this book and has had the pleasure of a close exchange with the author, I am deeply impressed by this scholarly yet poetically and beautifully written analysis of Japanese-style psychotherapy. I feel this poetic expression reflects the author’s own character. As a Westerner deeply fascinated by Japanese psychotherapies, Velizara Chervenkova presents her sincere and humble approach to “seeing things as they are” (jp.: *arugamama*), while as an academician her wish is to accurately convey to readers deep insights, presented even before the book’s main body – in the introductory Chapters 1 and 2. Quoting prominent Japanese authors such as Lafcadio

Hearn, Tetsurō Watsuji, Hayao Kawai, and Bin Kimura, the book discusses how Japanese religion, climate, geography, and culture have shaped a spiritual sensibility distinct from that of the West. It explains how these aspects are embedded in the structure of Japanese psychotherapies.

Chapter 3 discusses the origins, methods, and benefits of each therapy – Morita, Naikan, and Dohsa-hou – in the order they developed. It also compares each of them with Western approaches: Morita Therapy with Metapsychiatry, Naikan with Freudian psychoanalysis, and Dohsa-hou with Body-Mind Psychotherapy. In addition, the book's central thesis focuses on two key characteristics of Japanese psychotherapies, which the author considers most significant.

The first of them is the cultural value of silence and the concept of *ma* – Japanese culture fosters a mindset that cherishes silence and *ma* (Jp.: interval, space; between, in-between). In the therapist-client therapeutic relationship, *ma* and quiet moments are sustained by mutual trust, and these elements serve as powerful healing forces in all three therapies. And second, there is the deep interconnection between mind and body. As mental transformation occurs, physical symptoms often improve as well. This reflects a profound mind-body correlation that can ultimately lead to personal growth.

Chapter 4 uses case studies and the author's own training experiences in both Japan and Bulgaria to demonstrate that the healing power of *ma* and the mind-body connection are not limited to Japanese individuals – they possess universality that transcends culture and ethnicity. An appendix at the end includes photographs and materials taken by the author during her visits to various training centers and clinics across Japan. From the first to the last page, the book is filled with thoughtful efforts to clearly convey the practical aspects of Japanese psychotherapies, showing the author's deep consideration for her readers. As someone who was slightly involved in the publication process of this book, I am truly fascinated how the author's many years of hard work have been distilled into this one volume.

In conclusion, it has been nearly 40 years since Dr. David K. Reynolds introduced Japanese psychotherapies to the world in his book *The Quiet Therapies: Japanese Pathways to Personal Growth* (1980). This new work by Velizara Chervenкова serves as a precious successor, reconnecting Naikan therapy with the world. It also compels Japanese readers to reflect on the essence of their own culture, which they

might be forgetting. I cannot help but be moved by this truly outstanding book.

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Osamu Imura, PhD

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Western psychotherapies are primarily aimed at helping clients deepen their self-understanding, and at supporting their self-growth and transformation by verbalizing their own experiences, while therapist accepts and empathize with them. On the other hand, the three psychotherapies born in Japan are characterized by placing importance on the client's experiences themselves and on enhancing self-healing power rather than verbalization. Another difference from Western psychotherapies is that they are often conducted in groups. These and other characteristics are explained in details in the book crafted by Velizara Chervenкова.

Interest in Eastern cultures and religions is increasing in the Western world, and experience-oriented techniques such as mindfulness seem to be spreading. However, I think that Japanese psychotherapies in particular have not yet been introduced much enough outside Japan and the Asian continent. I therefore sincerely hope that Velizara Chervenкова's contribution to the spread of the knowledge on Japanese psychotherapies would serve as a catalyst for the further fusion between Western and Eastern psychotherapy.



Silently, We Soar Aloft (watercolor and acrylic paint on canvas, 300x900 mm), by Velizara Chervenкова-Antonova

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Translator's note: This book review was originally published in Japanese in the Japan Naikan Association's official journal, *Naikan Research* (Vol. 24, № 1, 2018; pp.71-72). It was translated into English by Velizara Chervenкова-Antonova upon the author's due permission, along with the commentary provided by Prof. Osamu Imura.