

## Hasekura in the Time of COVID-19

This follow-up to our initial issue of the Bulletin comes at what must be one of the strangest and most challenging times most of us have experienced. The worldwide spread of the novel coronavirus – which, at the time of this writing, shows no sign of slowing – has in the space of weeks shattered assumptions related to travel and social intercourse, upturned economies both national and international, and transformed, in ways that are probably permanent, the nature of work and employment. Most of us have first-hand experience with the influence that these dislocations have had on the academy, teaching classes electronically, working from home, and struggling to help students understand and navigate through a crisis that few, if any, of them imagined possible.

Alongside its more universally destructive effects, the pandemic presents challenges directly affecting key concerns of the Hasekura League. The current ban upon, and likely permanent changes to, international travel present barriers to many of the League's signature activities and have disrupted our planning for upcoming events.

The extent of this disruption first manifested itself in

March, when Tohoku University's participation in an inaugural event with our new League fellows at the University of British Columbia had to be significantly reduced. Looking forward, plans for upcoming events have to be abandoned or completely rethought, most notably in the case of our planned symposium in Rome in the autumn. Discussions are currently underway to delay that event until the spring of 2021 and hold it in a number of locations concurrently, connected with one other electronically in a live-virtual hybrid event.

Nor are such compromises entirely negative. While these necessary measures mean the sacrifice of much, if not all, of the valuable face-to-face interaction that takes place at symposia, they also present opportunities for increased participation from colleagues who might otherwise find it difficult to travel, as well as allowing for audiences far beyond the sizes possible in non-virtual space. It is with a view of both these challenges and opportunities that we are planning the next phase of Hasekura League activities. We welcome any suggestions or ideas and look forward to charting a new path for the future with you.



### ANNOUNCEMENTS

- In recognition of over 30 years of ground-breaking research into Japanese theatre, literature, and the arts, on April 29 the Japanese government awarded Hasekura League founder and editorial board member Professor Bonaventura Ruperti of 'Ca Foscari University of Venice The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon.
- March saw the publication of the latest Hasekura

Edition book, *Furusato: 'Home' at the Nexus of Politics, History, Art, Society, and Self*. Published by Mimesis International of Milan, the volume collects works based on the papers presented at the November 2018 Hasekura Symposium in Venice.

- As touched upon in the introductory remark, our colleagues at Tohoku University and Sapienza University of Rome are currently revising the plans for the symposium originally scheduled for November of this year. More details will be coming soon.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### December 2020 (tentative)

Hasekura League Symposium: COVID-19 and the Academy (in Japanese). Presented by Tohoku University.

### March 2021 (tentative)

Hasekura League International Symposium: The Long 1960s in Japan and Italy. Co-presented by Sapienza University of Rome and Tohoku University



## MEMBER PUBLICATIONS

Rafael Abad and Jesús San Bernardino (Universidad de Sevilla). [Date Masamune and the Letter to Seville: A New Translation](#) [Electronic Publication]. Hasekura Association of Coria del Río, 2020.

Igor Melani (Università di Firenze). [Rinascimento in Mostra. La civiltà Italiana tra storia e ideologia all'Esposizione Universale di Roma \(E42\)](#). Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2019.

Chelsea Szendi Schieder (Aoyama Gakuin University). "Demanding Publics: Women and Activism." In [The Routledge Companion to Gender and Japanese Culture](#). London: Routledge, 2020.



## CALLS FOR COLLABORATION

Chelsea Szendi Schieder (Aoyama Gakuin University) is soliciting proposals for short pieces for Teach311.org, a research and educational collective that has recently expanded its mission to include "TeachCOVID-19". Interested parties can see <https://www.teach311.org> for a list of theme areas.

The call for papers from participants to last year's Bologna Hasekura Symposium: Images, Philosophy, Communication, co-organized by Università di Bologna and Tohoku University will be issued in the near future in preparation for the publication of the proceedings. We would be delighted to see papers from as many participants as possible.

## NEXT ISSUE

Our next edition will feature more news, including revisions to the calendar of upcoming Hasekura events. We would also invite anyone interested in writing short pieces on their experiences as teachers and researchers during the current pandemic to submit those for publication. As always we welcome any news about publications and academic events and invite any comments or suggestions that you might have.

## ABOUT THE HASEKURA LEAGUE

The Hasekura League was formed in Florence in 2015 with representatives from 15 universities in Europe and Japan. Centered on a new international and interdisciplinary view of Japanese Studies, the League has expanded broadly in the years since, connecting with scholars in a wide variety of fields from institutions around the world. In 2020, Hasekura will continue its development and launch new initiatives in North America and Asia.

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