

GREETINGS FROM THE DIRECTOR - "PEOPLE AS THE ROOT"

Prof. Koji Ono

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TU has been accredited as a University for International Research Excellence by Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). TU is the first to receive this designation since the program's inception. Many of the readers may be aware of this, as the MEXT's decision defied widespread expectations that the University of Tokyo or Kyoto University would be chosen. With this designation, TU will receive significant government support to enhance its international research and educational environment. As a member who has been involved in the application process from the beginning, I am relieved but have mixed feelings about the accreditation.

In the ancient Chinese text *The Book of Documents (Shūjing)*, the famous line from "Songs of the Five Sons" states "The people are the root of the nation; when the root is solid, the nation is tranquil." This simple idea, often referred to as the origin of the concept of *minben* (民本) meaning "people as the root", raises fundamental questions about the essence of a university when "people" are

rephrased as "students" and "nation" as "university." TU is rapidly restructuring systems and establishing new organizations as a result of the aforementioned support. Some transformations may be hasty, intending to attract public attention. This is not limited to TU—other universities aiming for the next accreditation need to undertake similar transformations. To me, the line from *Shūjing* suggests that we have to carefully consider, in essence, whether the environment is fruitful and truly joyful for students who represent the next generation academics, lest universities be placed in precarious circumstances.

Amid these broader trends, the Hasekura League aims to be a platform where faculty and students from participating universities worldwide can enjoy academic pursuits, engage in dialogue, and expand their research scope through mutual encouragement.

We are pleased to present the fifth issue of THE HASEKURA BULLETIN. Please enjoy the activities of this growing network.

NEWS

April 2024 - New GPJS Students

The GPJS welcomed three graduate students. They actively engage in activities such as intensive classes and lectures.

July 2024 - Launch of Videos of the GPJS Admission Information

The videos of sessions, held twice a year for students considering applying to the GPJS, are available on the Program's YouTube channel. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oM-gzyqQuB0&t=4s>

September 2024 - GPJS Summer Study Tour to Kansai

For our third study tour, we ventured outside of Tohoku region for the first time to explore Kansai region. Prof. Ryusaku Nagaoka (Japanese Art History) led the participants to ancient temples and Buddha statues to experience the spiritual climate of the region.



UPCOMING EVENTS

December 6-7, 2024

Th 6th Tohoku Conference on Global Japanese Studies (TU)

December 12-13, 2024

International Workshop "Current Directions in International Japanese Studies" (University of Turin, Italy)

February 20-22, 2025

The 5th International Doctoral Symposium on Asian and African Studies (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy)

June 24-25, 2025

The 9th Annual Hasekura International Symposium "Possession/Dispossession-Embodiment, Exorcism, Ownership, and Loss" (The University of British Columbia, Canada)



ACTIVITY REPORTS (April 2024 - September 2024)

April 3 (Wed.) - 5 (Fri.), 2024 - The 4th International Doctoral Symposium on Asian and African Studies (Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy)

Four faculty members and three students participated in the fourth doctoral workshop. Professors Mitsuru Haga and Joshua S. Mostow delivered keynote lectures. Also, Prof. Haga and Assoc. Prof. Sachiko Kiyama served as tutors to advise the students. As this workshop offers students a valuable opportunity to receive direct instruction from international professors, we are eager to continue participating in the future. We extend our deep gratitude to Prof. Nicoletta Pesaro, the general chair, for her gracious hospitality.

Another purpose of this trip was to pay our respects at the grave of our friend and colleague the late Professor Bonaventura Ruperti, who passed away on January 5, 2023. The faculty members met his wife at Vicenza Station and headed to the cemetery together to pay our respects on behalf of TU. As the authority of Japanese Studies in Italy, Prof. Ruperti provided tremendous support to the Hasekura League through the Hasekura Seminars and other activities. We deeply appreciate his generous dedication in his lifetime and express our sincere condolences to his family. (H. Yokomizo)



April 18 (Thu.) - 19 (Fri.), 2024 - International Symposium "Littérature et écologie" (University Grenoble Alpes, France)

Four GPJS members joined the symposium, where Prof. Hroo Sato gave the keynote speech on the second day. We were fortunate to reunite Professors A. Imorou from the University of Ghana and B. de Meyer from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, as well as with students who had attended the Hasekura Summit or other international workshops held at TU, thanks to the growing network of the League. We would like to express our deep gratitude to Professors C. Denoyelle, C. Ramero, and D. Rojas for their efforts in organizing the symposium. (T. Kuroiwa)



June 27 (Thu.), 2024 - The 20th Hasekura Seminar (TU)

"The Narration of 'Manchuria' in Hayashi Fumiko's Works—From Prewar to Postwar Eras"

Speaker: Assoc. Prof. Tingting Zeng (Jilin University, China / TU)



July 4 (Thu.), 2024 - The 21th Hasekura Seminar (TU)

"The Paradigm Shift that Wasn't: The Enduring Myth of a 'Closed Country' and Japan's Immigration Policy"

Speaker: Assoc. Prof. Eric Han (William & Mary, U.S.)



September 13 (Fri.) - 16 (Mon.), 2024 - The 3rd GPJS Annual Summer Study Tour (Wakayama pref., Japan)

September featured the third of the GPJS study tours, which began in the summer of 2022 in preparation to welcome international guests to the Hasekura Summit. The crystal blue ocean at Nanki Shirahama sparkled under the sun. In contrast, the dim, primeval forests of the Kumano Kodō offered a serene atmosphere as we explored the origins of Japanese spirituality, tracing the rich water veins leading to Nachi Falls. For most of the participants, it was the first visit to the sacred area of Kisyu in Wakayama. The region's natural beauty, local food and sake healed our fatigue and the stress of everyday life. On the last day, we arrived at Kumano Hongu Shrine to offer prayers for the further development of the Hasekura League. Of course, we returned to academic seriousness for the seminars. (S. Kiyama)



September 25 (Wed.), 2024 - The 22nd Hasekura Seminar (TU)

"Unexpected Neighbors—The Japanese behind the Scenes of Yiddish Literature"

Speaker: Prof. Ber Kotlerman (Bar-Ilan University, Israel / TU)

GPJS ALUMNUS HIGHLIGHT

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Tomoya Masuda, Ph.D. (Letters)

- Post-Doctoral Research Fellow of Japan Society for Promotion of Sciences (TU)

(Second-generation GPJS graduate)

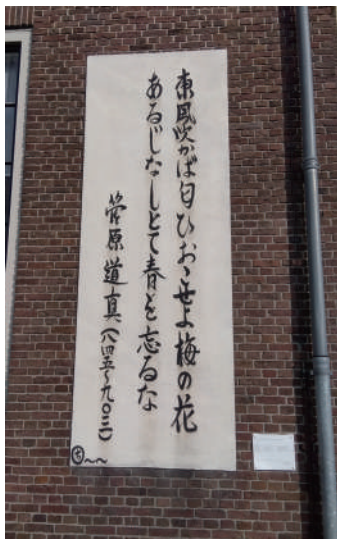


Q1. Looking back on your life as a graduate student at TU, what role do you think GPJS has played for you?

- For me, the experience at the GPJS played a significant role in building connections with people across national and disciplinary boundaries. One of the major benefits of belonging to the GPJS was having access to an environment where I could consult not only with faculty and students in my field but also with those from other disciplines, especially when I faced challenges in my research. Additionally, coming in touch with presentations, lectures, and papers from researchers in various fields was invaluable in advancing my research from an interdisciplinary perspective. I aim to actively leverage the connections I established through my involvement in the GPJS in my future research activities.

Q2. Leiden University, where you studied abroad, has been a leading center for Japanese Studies. Could you tell us about the characteristics of Japanese Studies at the university?

- Leiden University has one of the oldest traditions in Japanese Studies in Europe, with the department established in 1855. The city of Leiden itself reflects a strong connection with Japanese culture, hosting the Siebold House, which displays collections brought back from Japan during the late Edo period, and holding the annual Japan Market. Many undergraduate students in the Japanese Studies program were particularly interested in Japanese pop culture, such as anime and video games, while there seemed to be relatively less interest in topics like history, literature, or religion. However, at the graduate and postdoctoral levels, researchers from around the world gathered to engage in advanced research. I found it particularly impressive that scholars conducted active discussions across disciplines—such as literature, history, and anthropology—emphasizing Japanese Studies as a regional research field.



Q3. Unlike when you joined the GPJS, the Hasekura League has now grown to include more than 30 universities. What kind of contributions do you think the Hasekura League can make for young researchers at TU in the future?

- The Hasekura League plays a crucial role in fostering comprehensive collaboration across universities, especially within the field of Japanese Studies. For young researchers, it provides a valuable platform through workshops and academic exchanges, enabling them to adopt new methodologies and research trends. I also believe it offers opportunities for building academic networks and sharing information, especially for those aiming to pursue early-career opportunities, such as postdoctoral positions, at overseas institutions. Personally, I hope to see more active research exchanges among graduate students from member universities. Meeting peers conducting related research could open doors to collaborative projects. Furthermore, I think it would be useful to have a centralized directory listing faculty members, their areas of expertise, and research interests at participating universities, which would facilitate contacting potential collaborators.

Q4. You successfully obtained your doctoral degree while meeting the requirements of the GPJS. How do you think this was possible?

- The regular opportunities to present my research through the GPJS acted as a kind of "pace-setter," helping me stay on track with my progress. Additionally, presenting in English and to an audience beyond the field of intellectual history allowed me to approach my research from new perspectives that differ from conventional methods. Although the GPJS program involved numerous oral presentations, I made an effort to incorporate the feedback I received as early as possible into my written papers, which I believe contributed to my success. One of the challenges I faced was dealing with the language barrier—communicating smoothly in English and producing academic output in English remained difficult throughout. I intend to continue improving my English skills actively, both in communication and in academic writing.



Thank you so much! The picture of the Japanese poem by Sugawara no Michizane on the wall of a building at Leiden University will inspire the current program students who are aiming to succeed internationally. We wish you continued success.

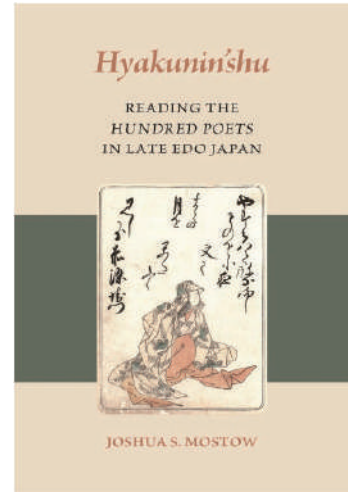
THE CURRENT HASELURA LEAGUE - BOOK REVIEWS

Hyakunin'shu, Reading the Hundred Poets in Late Edo Japan
University of Hawai'i Press, 2024

Author: Prof. Joshua S. Mostow (The University of British Columbia, Canada)
Reviewer: Prof. Hiroshi Yokomizo (TU)

This book is based on the original woodblock-printed edition of Keigyoku Hyakunin Isshu (one hundred poets collection) published during the Ansei era, presenting facsimile reproductions of one poem per page, accompanied by the English translations of the Waka poems and annotations, as well as the introduction of the illustrations. His excellent discernment led to his choice of the Keigyoku edition, the beloved version that was reprinted numerous times throughout the Edo period.

Prof. Mostow has made significant contributions to the promotion of the research as well as the dissemination of translations of Japanese court literature, particularly *The Tales of Ise* and *Hyakunin Isshu*. The 46-page introduction in this book is a masterpiece in itself, offering a fruitful discussion of the various versions of *Hyakunin Isshu* produced during the early modern period, accompanied by many illustrations. This is a testament to Prof. Mostow's unparalleled expertise. I am honored to say that the book is the definitive compilation of *Hyakunin Isshu* studies achieved by the leading scholar in Europe. I believe the book serves as the "bible" for those who wish to engage deeply with *Hyakunin Isshu*.



Prof. Mostow's (left) reunion with Prof. Yokomizo (right) at the 4th Doctoral Workshop held at Ca' Foscari University of Venice during his sabbatical in Italy in April 2024.



Hasekura Tsunenaga overlooking the Tohoku University Kawauchi Campus from the site of Sendai Castle (Aoba Castle).



Prof. Klautau (left) and Prof. Sato (right), who served as his mentor during his time as a graduate student at TU, chatting at the dinner party after the Hasekura Summit held in 2022.



The Hidden Prince Shōtoku: Pseudohistory and Occult Culture in Modern Japan
Chikuma Shobo, 2024

Author: Assoc. Prof. Orion Klautau (TU)
Reviewer: Prof. Hiroo Sato (TU)

Dr. Klautau is a prominent researcher of modern Japanese Buddhism, with numerous books and papers to his name, and has made significant contributions on the international stage. Shotoku Taishi (Prince Shōtoku) was an influential regent during the late sixth to the early seventh centuries, who provoked a number of dubious legends. This book addresses such narratives, which have been dismissed as 'false history,' and sheds light on the coexistence of 'false history' as entertainment and 'history' as academic study. Moreover, it addresses the fundamental question of why people seek the 'occult,' addressing the essence of the human mind. It is a stimulating work that pursues research methods beyond existing frameworks.

This book was awarded the 2024 Nakamura Hajime Oriental Study Prize, which commemorates achievements by young researchers involved in Asian thought and cultures. I felt proud to see Dr. Klautau celebrated grandly at the award party held at the Indian Embassy, with the Indian Ambassador to Japan in attendance.

Letter from the Editor: This academic year, face-to-face academic exchanges within the Hasekura League have been active. The early program students are graduating to pursue their careers as independent researchers in new environments. Meanwhile, the younger students enjoy learning from international researchers inside and outside the university. We aim to feature the research achievements and interactions of those involved in the Hasekura League in the next issue. We look forward to receiving your updates and information. (Assoc. Prof. Sachiko Kiyama)

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