

Eurasia Foundation International Lectures in the first semester of the 110 academic year
“Asian Community: The Construction and Transformation of East Asian Studies”
Lecture Series (10)

Topic: Relationship between Ishikawa Takuboku’s Work and East Asia

For the 10th Eurasia Foundation International Lecture in the 110th academic year of the Chinese Culture University, we invited the honorary professor of Tenri University, Professor Noboru Ota to give a lecture entitled “Relationship between Ishikawa Takuboku’s Work and East Asia.” This is the first time in this semester to have a foreign guest speaker deliver the lecture online. At the beginning, Professor Ota stated that he encountered the SARS epidemic when he was an exchange professor in our department in 2002, and this time he was unable to visit Taiwan due to the COVID-19 epidemic.

1. Ishikawa Takuboku (born on February 20, 1886, died on April 13, 1912): What kind of "existence" is this poet

Mr. Ota first introduced Takuboku’s life and works. Citing the historian Masanao Kano’s remark in his work, the death of two thinkers, Fukuzawa Yukichi and Nakae Zhaomin, both died in 1901, symbolizes the light and shadow of the “empire” of modern Japan from the First Sino-Japanese War to the Russo-Japanese War. Takuboku took the issues of the nation and the country, to which Fukuzawa and Nakae are committed, as his own issues. Ishikawa Takuboku is such a writer who strives to live in the opening decade of the 20th century.

2. How did Takuboku view the First Sino-Japanese War (August 1894~April 1895)

The First Sino-Japanese War occurred when Takuboku was not yet ten years old. In “Kuchu kaki (空中書, Book in the Sky)” (*Iwate Nippo*, October 16, 1908), Takuboku wrote as follows. Japan breeds contempt for Qing and Russia because of the victories over these two countries; however, this thinking is narrow and shallow. Because there is a “the Gelaohui (Elder Brothers Society)” in China, it is an organization that cultivates talents in the future. In the “Hyakukai Tsushin (百回通信, Hundred Times Correspondence)” (*Iwate Nippo*, October 9, 1909), he mourned the death of Zhang Zhidong, a senior official of the Qing government and praised Zhang Zhidong for sending many talents to Japan to study in the first place. Professor Ota pointed out that Takuboku believes that the increase of Chinese students after the Russo-Japanese War will affect China’s future direction.

3. How did Takuboku view the Russo-Japanese War (Feb. 1904~Sept. 1905)

Soon after the war between Japan and Russia, Takuboku wrote “Senun Yoroku (戰雲余祿, The Remains of the War)” (*Iwate Nippo*, March 12 and 19, 1904). Takuboku believed that although Russia is an enemy country, it is also a country worthy of mercy. Because most of the people in Russia were forced to be under the tyranny of the imperial government. He hoped that the

end of the war will bring peace to the East and the rest of the world, and the Russian people will also be liberated. In addition, he even lamented that the ban on the works of Tolstoy and Gorky in Russia is a danger to freedom of speech. Therefore, Takuboku also wrote poems to mourn the death of the enemy commander, Vice admiral Makarov. It can be seen in the long poem titled “Mourning to Vice admiral Makarov” that Takuboku wrote about the heroic soldiers of the enemy country in the poem to commemorate him.

4. How did Takuboku view Japan’s Annexation of Korea (Aug. 1910)

The “Boshin shousho (戊申詔書 Edict of Wushen)” issued in March 1908 by the cabinet of Taro Katsura was aimed at strengthening the Kokutai Theory of Japan, which view emperor as center, after the Meiji Restoration. In March 1909, Takuboku worked at the *Asahi Shimbun* in Tokyo, and immediately faced the promulgation of the “Newspaper Law” that strengthened the newspaper censorship system. The severe punishment of speech control was to prepare for the annexation of South Korea. On October 26, 1909, Ito Hirobumi, the first the Resident-General of Korea, was assassinated by Ahn Jung-geon. Takuboku presented two historical views in the “Sixteen Ito’s Obituaries” in the “Hundred Times Correspondence.” On one hand, he mourned for Ito’s death for Japan; on the other, he showed his understanding of what did Koreans think. In Professor Ota’s research, he pointed out that Takuboku had intertwined multiple viewpoints of nationalism and internationalism. It can be judged that Takuboku was one of few people with objective and relative views at that time.

5. How did Takuboku view the Revolution of 1911 (Oct. 1911)

Takuboku paid high attention to the 1911 Revolution led by the Chinese United League that took place on October 10, 1911. Regarding the 1911 Revolution, Professor Ota analyzed that Takuboku perceived that the occurrence of the 1911 Revolution was closely related to the political situation that the Qing government sent students to Japan after the Russo-Japanese War. Based on the observation of people-led revolution in China, Takuboku proposed a specific plan for Japan’s system reform.

6. The acceptance of Takubokus in East Asia

After Takuboku’s death, his collection of Tanka (短歌, “short poem”) and collection of poems were released. In these work, he argued that the source of social problems was “poverty,” and these works has become a cheer for the people and become widely known. In China, because Zhou Zuoren loved to read Takuboku’s works and translated them into Chinese, Takuboku’s work brought a great influence on China’s new poetry revolution in 1920. In Taiwan, there are the research and translation on Takuboku by Lin Pih-Siung (林丕雄, Honorary Professor of Tamkang University), Lin, Suei-Fu. (林水福, Chairman of Taiwan International Society of Takuboku Studies), Kao, Shu-Ling (高淑玲, Associate Professor of Jinwen University of Science and Technology), Liu, Yi-Chen (劉怡臻, doctoral program at Meiji University) and others.

(Web link: <https://eurasia.pccu.edu.tw/index.php>)

(Written by: Tsukamoto Zenya, Associate Professor, the Department of Japanese Language and Literature)

(Chinese translation: Hsin-I Huang, the Department of Japanese Language and Literature)