

**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 (12)**  
**Topic: History, Memory and Japanese Media: Analysis of NHK Asadora**

For the 12th lecture of the Eurasia Foundation International Lecture, we invited Associate Professor Hsin-I Huang from the Department of Japanese Language and Literature to give a lecture entitled “History, Memory and Japanese Media: Analysis of NHK Asadora (Morning Drama).”<sup>1</sup> Professor Huang first started with how she changed discipline and her starting point of research, and shared the experience of studying abroad with students. She continued to introduce her own research on NHK Asadora from the perspective of media and society, including the origin of NHK Asadora, periods and characteristics of this series, and further describe the historical memory of the war depicted in the Asadora.

Professor Huang first mentioned her own trans-disciplinary experience from Japanese studies to mass communications studies. She suggested that students can apply for undergraduate research project actively to cultivate the foundation of research and encourage students to study abroad by sharing her experience of studying in Japan and the United States. She continued to mention that it has been 60 years since the beginning of the Asadora. The naming of the TV “serial novel” is related to the “serial novel” on the newspaper. It took a very unique style that is broadcast in the morning and is aired for 15 minutes per episode. In Professor Huang’s research, the Asadora is divided into five periods. Asadora in the first period (1961-1974) were mostly literary works in the early days. After the broadcast of “おはなはん” (Miss Flower) in 1966, the Asadora began to adopt a storyline that tells the life story of heroine from certain historical era, while another theme of story tells a story of one family. In the second period (1975-1988), the average ratings were as high as 40%. Most drama in this period portrait a heroine experiencing war with the Meiji, Taisho, and Showa period as the background. The third period (1989-2000) and the fourth period (2001-2010) conform to the pulse of the times and thus, the theme of the story has changed to modern women’s pursuit of dreams and love, and regional revitalization. The theme of story in the fifth period (2011-) has returned to the previous theme that portraits the life story of heroine. The comment “the

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<sup>1</sup> The full name is *Renzoku Terebi Shōsetsu* (連続テレビ小説, serial TV novel), usually shortened as *Asadora* (朝ドラ, Morning Drama).

nurturing of Japanese common culture” demonstrated that the importance of Asadora. Professor Huang pointed out that after analyzing the existing video and texts in *TV weekly*, it is found that the proportion of episodes that mention war in Asadora is 42%, 84%, 28%, 14%, 63% in order. When conducting research on TV dramas with methods in media studies, we adopt empirical methods such as scene (text) analysis, recording the movement of screen to reproduce the text of image.

In the lecture, Professor Huang explained the war and women in the Asadora from three perspectives: ① the Asadora from the 1960s to 2000s, ② the Asadora after 2011, and ③ the end of the war drama after 2011. Professor Huang also played some of the video clips from these works like the Hirohito surrender broadcast, explaining the depiction of World War II war in the Asadora. It can be seen from the video that ① Asadoras from the 1960s to the 2000s: women’s experiences of war were highly similar. It is mostly presented when the women encounter men’s expeditions, bombing, shelter, and receipt of war dead bulletins, and then the women guards the home front (銃後の守り). Although the heroine’s attitude towards war was slightly different in different period, it was generally anti-war, the heroine in the 1970s and 1980s in particular showed very stronger anti-war stance. ② Asadora after 2011: In the 2011 “おひさま” (Yoko), different to anti-war attitude in the past, the heroine approved her brother and the student going to the battlefield. Professor Huang focused on the drama produced by Tokyo Broadcasting Bureau (AK) and Osaka Broadcasting Bureau (BK) after 2011. Before 2015, BK took a strong anti-war stance, but after 2016, the anti-war message gradually faded, tending to emphasize personal happiness. ③ End of the war drama after 2011: The End of the war drama with women as heroine mostly present anti-war messages and tend to be based on regional war experience. In sum, the common features of the war presented in the Asadora and the end of the war drama are:

1. Women guard the home front
2. Few descriptions of the frontline battlefield but describing the suffering of the common people
3. Men usually are absent and women take on the responsibility of taking care of the family
4. Women = anti-war.

Looking at the relationship between the media and society from Asadora, especially when

analyzing the historical memory of war as the focus in this speech, we can see that the depiction of war in the works of different periods still maintains a certain proportion. The presentation of the historical memory of “war” in the television media has multiple meanings. The memory of war that should have been weathered is constantly being re-interpreted and become the common memory of the Japanese people. Even today, more than 70 years after the war, the setting of the war can still be seen in the Asadora, and the haddling and changes of the presentation of the war in different periods can also be regarded as an important message. During the Q &A section, students asked questions enthusiastically. Questions including “why there are frequent depiction of wars in Asadora” and “What impact that anti-war messages brought to the Japanese people,” “whether such subjects are related to the policies of the Japanese government,” whether choosing women as the main character can raise the awareness of Japanese women,” and “the in-depth interpretation of Japanese culture,” etc. The lecture ended with heated discussion.

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

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