

The Center for Comparative Japanese Studies · Support Program for Improving Graduate School Education THE 1ST PUBLIC LECTURE

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| Speaker | Annick HORIUCHI (Professor, la Section d'Etudes Japonaises, UFR Langues et Civilizations de l'Asie, l'Université Paris Diderot (Paris 7), (the Section of Japanese Studies, UFR Asian Languages and Civilizations, the University of Paris Diderot (Paris 7)), France) |
| Topic | The Network of Knowledge in Modern Japan — Observation and Insight into the Discourses Related to Russia — |
| Time | May 29 th (Thursday), 2008 13:00~15:00 |
| Place | Faculty of Letters & Education, Building 1, 1 st Floor, Large Conference Room |
| Moderator | Laure SCHWARTZ-ARENARES (Associate Professor, Ochanomizu University) YORIZUMI, Mitsuko (Associate Professor, Ochanomizu University) |

On May the 29th, we invited Professor HORIUCHI (the Université Paris (Paris 7)) to deliver a speech titled “The Network of Knowledge in Modern Japan – Observation and Insight into the Discourses Related to Russia,” in the name of the project “Fostering Global Communication Skills in Japanese Cultural Studies” organized under the Support Program for Improving Graduate School Education, and as part of the activities of the Center for Comparative Japanese Studies at Ochanomizu University

In what follows, I will briefly summarize her speech.

Professor HORIUCHI points out that there were a rise of the status of Dutch Studies (or Dutch learning) and a simultaneous, relative fall of the status of the conventional academic systems during the radical social changes from the Tenmei era to the Bunka era in the Edo Period. The major trigger for the changes is considered to be the “arrival of Russian missions” during these eras such as the arrival of Benyovsky and that of Laxman. During this time period, it was only Dutch scholars who had crucial information on Russia, and in that sense it was impossible for the government to make their policies on the northern regions without the information given by these Dutch scholars.

There were many Dutch scholars who provided the government with the information on Russia, most of which was based on the knowledge translated or obtained from Dutch books. But as these Dutch books were extremely expensive and were translated in general under the order of the government, the information never spread among the general public.

Further, the government own policies and attitudes greatly affected scholars’ positions. For instance, during the time of TANUMA, Okitsugu, the government aggressively ventured on the exploitation of *EZO* (Hokkaido), sending for investigation missions the government’s civil engineers AOSHIMA, Shunzo and SATO, Genrokuro as well as mathematician MOGAMI, Tokunai. During the time of conservative MATSUDAIRA, Sadanobu, however, the government arrested both AOSHIMA and MOGAMI for espionage. That is, there was no “academic freedom” during this time period; scholars had to do their study and research, always worrying about the moves and position of their government.

When we look at Dutch scholars’ documents of the research on Russia, we can divide them into three categories:

- (1) documents on geography;
- (2) documents of reports; and
- (3) socio-political documents.

The first category (the “documents on geography”) is the documents based on the translations done at the request of the government. Most of them were still manuscripts, but among them, KUCHIKI Masatsuna’s *TAISEI-YOCHI-ZUSETSU (Illustrated Explanation of Western Geography)*, a geography book based on several Dutch books, was exceptionally published in 1789, and became very popular. Also it is notable that the group of translators of the well known book, *KAITAI-SHINSHO (lit. New Book on Anatomy)*, including MAENO, Ryoutaku and KATSURAGAWA, Hoshuu, helped translate this geography book, and was in the very position to exert a direct influence on the government’s foreign policy.

The second (the “documents of reports”) has the largest collection of documents on Russia. Most remarkable are the reports of exploration by some Japanese people and the reports compiled from the witnesses by drifted people. In particular, for the former, the report by MOGAMI, Tokunai who had been to Sakhalin twice, and, for the latter, the one by DAIKOKUYA, Kodayu who had the honor to meet Ekaterina II and was permitted to return to Japan are of great importance.

For the third category (the “socio-political documents”), we have found a proposal for the policy toward Russia made by HONDA, Toshiaki and HAYASHI, Shihei, for instance. They freely suggested that their government should radically change their policies. It was an interesting characteristic of the Tenmei and Kansei eras that some scholars with no stable position could make audacious proposals to their government. Another similar case is KUDO, Heisuke, a medical doctor of the Sendai clan; KUDO handed in a book titled *AKAEZO-FUUSETSU-KOU (lit. An Insight into Rumors on Russians)* to the government in 1783 at the request of TANUMA, Okitsugu – an unprecedented book full of precious information on Russia, in which KUDO proposed, as Japan’s new policies, to start trades with other countries and the exploitation of *EZO* (Hokkaido). This shows that a mere clan doctor could possibly influence on the policy-making processes by the top of the government during this time period.

As demonstrated in the above argument, from the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century, the intellectuals, in particular Dutch scholars, rose in their status and started to have political powers. As is shown in some of the illustrations of “*SHIRANDOU-SHINGENKAI-ZU (Dutch New Year’s Day)*,” Dutch scholars and those related to them started to build networks and intellectually stimulated each other, thereby increasing their academic and social influence.

The Professor HORIUCHI’s above speech has drastically changed our images of Dutch studies. Normally, the term “Dutch studies” gives us an impression that they always spent their time in introducing Western advanced civilization, as they did so in translating *KAITAI-SHINSHO*. Her explanation, however, using a great amount of materials, has revealed that the knowledge they obtained and the free way of thinking they maintained greatly influenced on Japanese society during the Edo Period.

After the speech, Professor TAKASHIMA, Motohiro, teaching the history of modern Japanese thought at our University, made some comments, and our graduate students designated as questioners (two majoring in Japanese history, two in the history of Japanese thought) posed several questions, to which Professor HORIUCHI made some complementary remarks, and helped our further understanding.

Here I have summarized Professor HORIUCHI’s speech. Her account of the way in which the intellectuals acted during the Edo Period was enormously stimulating and enlightening to all of us, who do research on Japan. I truly wish her great speech will set off further exchanges with the students and the staff members including Professor HORIUCHI from the Université Paris (Paris 7).

(Associate Professor, Ochanomizu University, YORIZUMI, Mitsuko)