

GREETING FROM ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF THE HASEKURA LEAGUE

Prof. Emer. Hiroo Sato

Former Designated Professor of the International Graduate Program for Japanese Studies (GPJS)
Tohoku University (TU), Japan



The Fourth EAJ (European Association for Japanese Studies) Japan Conference, recently convened at TU, concluded with marked success. I was deeply impressed that the staff of the GPJS was principally responsible for the organization of this international conference of such scale.

This year witnessed the hottest summer ever recorded. In addition to the rapid climatic shifts now described as “global boiling,” environmental degradation has grown increasingly severe as we enter what is termed the “Anthropocene.” Continuous advancement toward a bright and prosperous future long served as a shared premise of modern philosophy and historiography. Yet what we now observe as a result of modernity’s development is the very antithesis of the futures once forecast.

Western civilization has lost the sense that humans share the world with countless other beings. There, only humans are regarded as privileged on Earth. Nature, the land, and the oceans are seen just as objects for human use and exploitation.

Traditional cultures across Asia, including Japan, are marked by a pronounced attitude of humble listening to the messages from nature. This is grounded in a value that warns against human exceptionalism and prioritizes the harmony of all beings.

Contemporary society appears to have entered an age in which voices no longer reach one another. The spaces surrounding us today are governed not by the desire for solidarity and empathy, but rather by emotions of rejection and animosity. It was the wisdom of Asia that sought the radiance of the sacred within all phenomena and endeavored to discern the voices of the voiceless. In this desolate age, should we once again turn our attention to the traditional thought of Japan and Asia—ideas long disparaged by the West as “polytheism” or “animism”?

The role that International Japanese Studies ought to fulfill has become all the more significant. I am even more convinced of this, after listening to the lively presentations and discussions in this conference.

NEWS

Oct. 2025 - 38 Universities Participate in the Hasekura League!

The Hasekura League continues to expand, forming a global network with universities from Europe, Asia, Africa, Oceania, and the Americas. We look forward to many researchers from participating universities coming together at future events.

March 2025 - Two GPJS Students Earn Their Doctorates

Two young scholars from GPJS have earned their Ph.Ds: Yu Ai and Yota Watanabe, both specializing in cultural anthropology.

Sep. 2025 - EAJ Japan Conference Held at TU

This summer, the European Association for Japanese Studies (EAJS) Japan Conference was held at TU, with nearly 400 participants. Please visit the website to see many scholars from the Hasekura League gathered in Sendai.

<https://gpjs.tohoku.ac.jp/eajs/en/>



UPCOMING EVENTS

Dec. 13-14, 2025

7th Tohoku International Conference on Global Japanese Studies

Building on the theme of the 9th Hasekura Symposium, this year’s sessions focuses on “Rethinking the Meaning of Ownership – Further Insights from Japanese Studies,” featuring

Mar. 17-19, 2026

6th International Doctoral Symposium on Asian and African Studies (IDSAA VI)

The next symposium is scheduled to be held at TU.

Mar, 2027.

10th Hasekura Symposium (University of Bologna, Italy)

The Hasekura Symposium, which has been hosted in Tohoku, Rome, and Vancouver, will return to Italy for its next edition, to be held at the University of Bologna.



ACTIVITY REPORTS (October 2024 - September 2025)

- 🌀 November 19 (Tue.), 2024 - The 23th Hasekura Seminar (TU)
"The Creole Prototype and the Problem of Complexity"
Speaker: Prof. Umberto Ansaldi (The University of Hong Kong)
- 🌀 December 6 (Fri.) - 8 (Sun.), 2024 - 6th Tohoku Conference on Global Japanese Studies (TU)
"A Sense of Place: Art and Innovative Methods" (pp.4-5)
- 🌀 December 12 (Thu.) - 13 (Fri.), 2024 - International Workshop University of Turin, Italy)
"Current Directions in International Japanese Studies" (p.3)
- 🌀 February 20 (Thu.) - 22 (Sat.), 2025 - 5th International Doctoral Symposium on Asian and African Studies (IDSAAS V; Sapienza University of Rome, Italy; p.3)
- 🌀 March 14 (Fri.), 2025 - Symposium (University of Grenoble Alpes, France)
"Théâtre d'hier, Théâtre d'ailleurs"
- 🌀 March 18 (Tue.) - 19 (Wed.), 2025 - The Workshop 2025 (TU)
"The International Interdisciplinary Japan Studies Graduate Workshop 2025"
- 🌀 March 24 (Mon.), 2025 - GPJS Symposium (TU)
"Postwar Mass Production and Consumption"
Speakers: Assoc. Prof. Isamu Mitsuzono (Hokkaido University) and Assoc. Prof. Shumpei Iwao (Keio University)
- 🌀 April 18 (Fri.), 2025 - The 24th Hasekura Seminar (TU)
"Poland Day"
Speakers: Dr. eng. Izabela Zawiska (Jagiellonian University), Dr. Paweł Dybała (Jagiellonian University), and Prof. Ewa Kamińska (Jagiellonian University)



- 🌀 May 10 (Sat.), 2025 - GPJS Symposium (TU)
"The Miyagi Museum of Art, the Future of Urban Landscapes, and Kunio Maekawa's Legacy – Celebrating the Publication of Unfinished Architecture"
Speakers: Prof. Hiroshi Matsukuma (Kanagawa University), Mr. Hiroshi Oune (Oune Architectural Office), Ms. Shoko Nishiota-chime (Freelance Writer), Prof. Mitsuru Haga (TU), Pro. Taro Igarashi (TU), Prof. Emer. Keiichi Noe (TU), Prof. Akihiro Ozaki (TU), and Prof. Ichiro Mori (TU)
- 🌀 June 24 (Tue.) - 25 (Wed.), 2025 - 8th Hasekura Annual International Japanese Studies Symposium (British Columbia University, Canada)
"Possession/Dispossession: Embodiment, Exorcism, Ownership, and Loss" pp.6-7)
- 🌀 July 10 (Fri.), 2025 - 6th Special Expert Lecture (TU)
"A Researcher's Journey: The Joy of Breaking out of Your Shell"
Speaker: Prof. Maki Suemitsu (TU)
- 🌀 September 12 (Fri.) - 15 (Mon.), 2025 - GPJS Annual Summer Camp (Wakayama and Nara prefectures, Japan)
- 🌀 September 20 (Sat.) - 21 (Sun.), 2025 - 4th European Association for Japanese Studies (EAJS) Japan Conference (TU)



EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

International Workshop

Current Directions in International Japanese Studies

December 12 (Thu.) - 13 (Fri.), 2024 at the University of Turin, Italy

This workshop opened with welcoming remarks by Prof. Sonia Favi of the University of Turin. From TU, five faculty members from CIJS, four faculty members from GPJS, and two GPJS graduate students gave presentations. While the topics of the presentations were diverse, they closely reflected the overall theme of the workshop and highlighted the broad range of current interests in Japanese Studies.

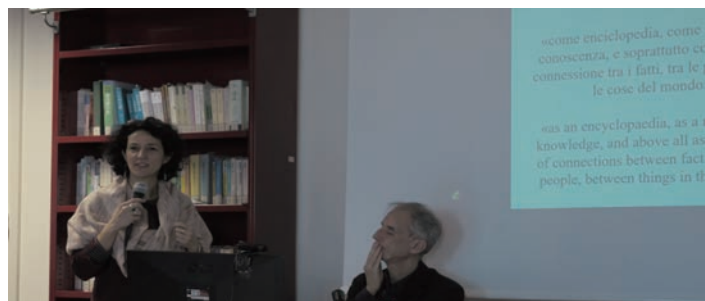
Before the workshop, members of GPJS went on an excursion, visiting the Egyptian Museum and the Palace of Venaria on the outskirts of Turin. It was a valuable opportunity to experience firsthand the magnificence of the architecture and cultural heritage associated with the Kingdom of Sardinia, whose capital was Turin under the rule of the House of Savoy. (R. Nagaoka)



5th International Doctoral Symposium on Asian and African Studies (IDSAAS V)

February 20 (Thu.) - 22 (Sat.), 2025 at the Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

This year's event was once again hosted at Sapienza, with Assoc. Prof. Federica Casalin serving as the chair. The symposium brought together many Ph.D. students from Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Heidelberg University, Lancaster University, and TU, making it a highly successful gathering. From TU-GPJS, two students participated and gained valuable experience. Dr. Elena Fabbretti, who presented her research two years ago as a graduate student at TU, returned this time as a faculty member and chaired one of the sessions. This development is thanks to the Hasekura League network. The 6th symposium will be held at TU in March 2026, and we look forward to welcoming young researchers of Asian and African studies from Europe to gain fresh inspiration from their time in Sendai. (S. Kiyama)



GPJS Symposium

"The Miyagi Museum of Art, the Future of Urban Landscapes, and Kunio Maekawa's Legacy" Celebrating the Publication of "Unfinished Architecture" May 10 (Sat.), 2025 at TU

The Miyagi Museum of Art, a beloved landmark of the prefecture, was once slated for relocation in 2019, but strong civic action successfully overturned the decision. A GPJS symposium held in 2020 also contributed to this outcome. This year's symposium, organized by Prof. Ichiro Mori to mark the 120th anniversary of architect Kunio Maekawa, brought together Prof. Hiroshi Matsukuma, architect Hiroshi Oune, civic leader Shoko Nishiodachime, and TU faculty to revisit issues of modern architecture and urban landscapes. The event highlighted how the humanities and social sciences can help protect the urban environment. Congratulations on Prof. Matsukuma's book receiving the 29th Mainichi Publishing Culture Award. (S. Kiyama)



6th Tohoku International Conference on Global Japanese Studies

"A Sense of Place: Art and Innovative Methods"

December 6 (Fri.) to 8 (Sun.), 2024 at TU

Organizer: Assoc. Prof. Yosuke Washiya (GPJS, TU)

We welcomed leading researchers to hold four sessions on the first day, followed by a student session on the second day where GPJS students presented their research. Hongyu Chen received the Hasekura Award for the outstanding master's presentation.

Session 1: In Pursuit of artistic methods: In and beyond the field

Organizer/Moderator: Assoc. Prof. Yosuke Washiya (GPJS, TU)

Speakers: Ms. Yukiko Kaneko (University of British Columbia)

Assist. Prof. Shawn Forde (University of British Columbia)

Dr. Thorsten Gieser (Universität Koblenz)

This Session explored the possibilities and tensions of arts-based methods across anthropology and related fields. The session brought together three scholars who investigate how artistic forms shape research practice and knowledge production. Yukiko Kaneko reflected on the hesitation to classify research data as "art," questioning disciplinary boundaries. Shawn Forde demonstrated how comics can represent complex relations of self, space, and time in ethnographic work. Thorsten Gieser examined hunting experiences through sensory anthropology, showing how artistic methods help express phenomena that resist verbal description. (Y. Washiya)

Session 2: The Language of History meets the History of Language: Jesuit Sources in Japanese Studies

Organizers: Assoc. Prof. Orion Klautau (GPJS, TU)

Assoc. Prof. Matthew Zisk (GPJS, TU)

Moderator: Prof. Seiji Hoshino (Kokugakuin University)

Speakers: Assoc. Prof. Matthew Zisk (GPJS, TU)

Ms. Sophie Takahashi (Ruhr-Universität Bochum)

Prof. Alexandra Curvelo (NOVA University of Lisbon)

Dr. Romulo Ehalt (Max Planck Institute)

The session highlighted the interdisciplinary value of Jesuit writings produced in Japan during the 16th and 17th centuries. Zisk demonstrated the significance of early Christian texts, such as grammars, dictionaries, for Japanese historical linguistics. He emphasized how Jesuit authors recorded the phonology of the language, vernacular usage and dialectal features with a precision unmatched by contemporary Japanese sources, making these materials indispensable for reconstructing early-modern linguistic changes. Takahashi examined the ongoing digitization of the Jesuit Compendia, showing how its transformation from manuscript to searchable digital corpus enables new forms of philological, linguistic, and historical analysis. Her presentation underscored the project's potential to democratize access and foster collaborative scholarship. Curvelo shifted attention to visual and material culture, revealing how missionary accounts documented Japanese artistic practices, everyday objects, and aesthetic conventions. Finally, Ehalt explored hitogaeshirei and restitutio in Jesuit letters, arguing that legal and theological vocabulary formed a crucial interpretive framework. (M. Zisk)



Session 3: Affect, Feeling, and Nation/Society

Organizers: Prof. Takashi Onuki (TU)

Assoc. Prof. Sachiko Kiyama (GPJS, TU)

Moderator: Prof. James Tink (TU)

Speakers: Prof. Fuhito Endo (Seikei University)

Dr. Ryan Johnson

(University of Tokyo/University of Melbourne)

Prof. Takashi Onuki (TU)

This session examined how affect and feeling shaped national and social imaginaries across literature and art.

Organized by Sachiko Kiyama and Takashi Onuki and chaired by James Tink, the panel brought together three perspectives.

Fuhito Endo explored the ontology of the invisible in British and Japanese modern art, reconsidering affective materiality. Ryan Johnson discussed translation and national identity in mid-century modern fiction. Finally, Takashi Onuki analyzed the creation of the "c. 23,000 B.C." episode in Raymond Williams's final novel, considering how "structure of feeling" can be applied to Japanese studies. (T. Onuki)



Session 4: New Methodological Perspectives in Economic and Business History

Organizers: Assoc. Prof. Takenobu Yuki (GPJS, TU)

Assoc. Prof. Kazuho Sakai (TU)

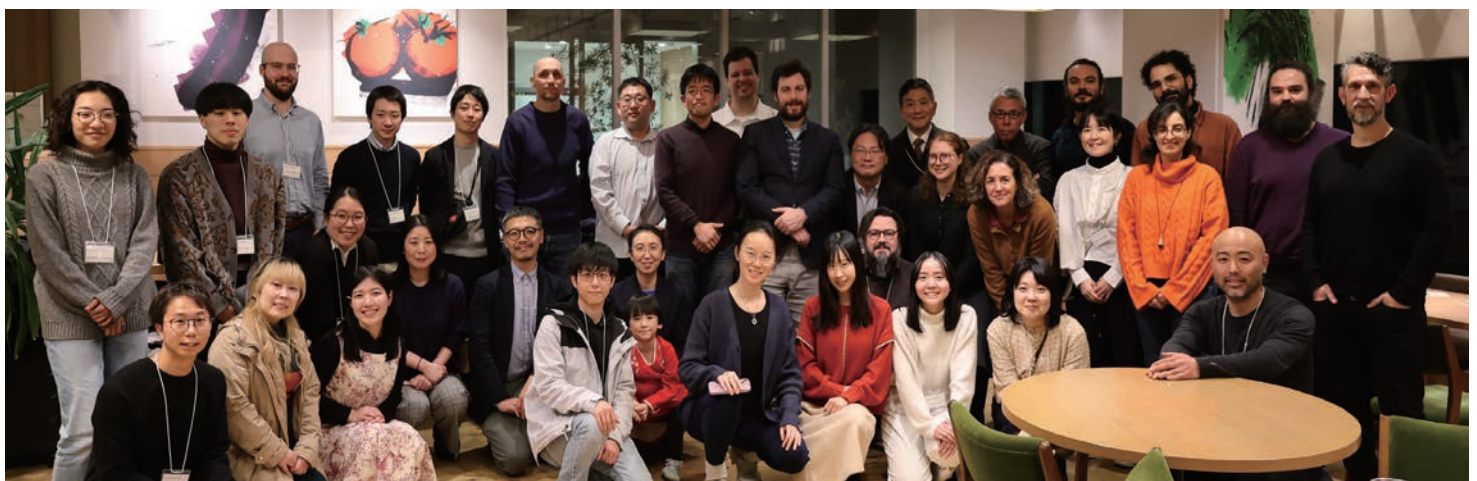
Moderator: Assist. Prof. Tingting Zhang (TU)

Speakers: Ms. Narusa Yamato (Stanford University)

Dr. Tatsuki Inoue (Meiji University)

Assoc. Prof. Hiromichi Hasebe (Nihon University)

This session explored new methodological approaches in economic and business history. Yamato examined the historical background of Hachijō Island by focusing on the geographical factors behind the shift in its main industry from silk production to dairy farming. Inoue empirically demonstrated, using econometric techniques, the negative impact of coal smoke on infant mortality during the Meiji period. Hasebe analyzed how Sony and Panasonic strategically reconstruct their past glory through the method of "rhetorical history." Together, these three papers present new insights that reassess Japan's modernization and industrialization from the perspectives of environment, region, and corporate management. (T. Yuki)



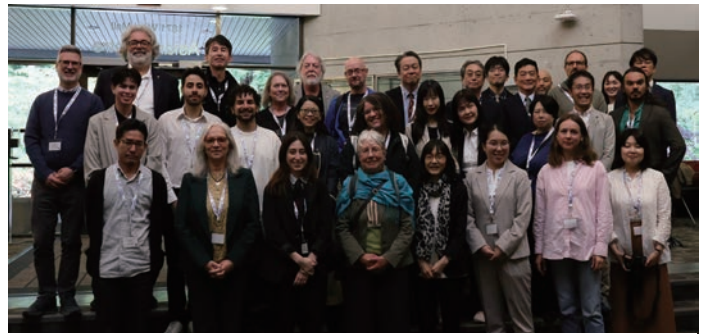
The 9th Annual Hasekura International Symposium

"Possession / Dispossession: Embodiment, Exorcism, Ownership, and Loss." June 24 (Tue.) - 25 (Wed.) at The University of British Columbia, Canada

Following the opening remarks by Prof. Sharalyn Orbaugh, Chair of the Department of Asian Studies at UBC, former Chair Prof. Joshua Mostow explained the purpose of the symposium. He highlighted its focus on the concepts and metaphors of possession and dispossession, and on presenting research and insights from an interdisciplinary perspective, encompassing the humanities (including religious studies, literary studies, and history) as well as the social sciences (including anthropology, sociology, and environmental studies). From TU, eight faculty members affiliated with GPJS and CIJS, together with five graduate students, gave well-prepared presentations. Four faculty members from Sapienza University of Rome, a member of the Hasekura League, also participated.

Before and after the symposium, participants visited the Vancouver Art Gallery, Capilano Canyon, and the UBC Museum of Anthropology, gaining deeper understanding of Vancouver's nature, culture, history, and present situation, as well as the history of Indigenous peoples and Canada's responses to it. On the evening before the symposium, faculty members were invited to a barbecue party at the home of Professors Orbaugh and Mostow, where they enjoyed local foods and strengthened personal ties. (R. Nagaoka)

Note: Wijaya Andhika, a Ph.D. student at TU who visited Vancouver for the first time, captured her memories of the trip in the charming four-panel comic below.



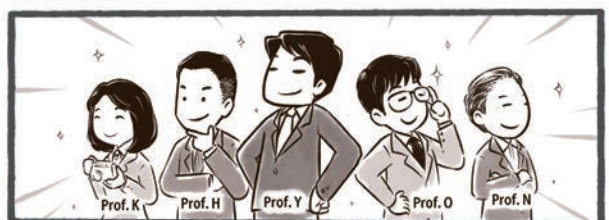
Andhika Wijaya

Our Time in Vancouver



Andhika Wijaya

Presentation Attire



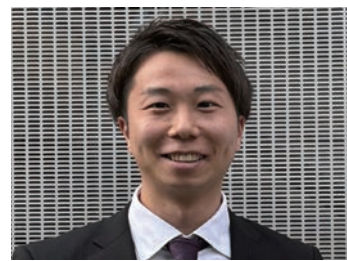
GPJS ALUMNUS HIGHLIGHT

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Yota Watanabe, Ph.D. (Letters)

Department of Cultural Anthropology, Graduate School of Arts and Letters, TU

Project Researcher, Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology, The University of Tokyo



Q1. Watanabe-san, please tell me about your current activities.

—I am working as a Project Researcher in the Social Inclusion Systems Laboratory. This laboratory has 8 projects, and I belong to the “Research on Human Resources Development for Well-Being Community” project. This project aims to identify, through research, the qualities possessed by outstanding coordinators, engaging in community care, and to implement training programmes based on these qualities. My primary responsibilities include research, analysis, and training evaluation. In my individual research, I have developed my doctoral studies on poverty to family and kinship study. I am addressing the research question of why social isolation occurs in Japanese poverty, despite East Asian society is said to emphasise family ties. In the future, I will explore new aspects of East Asian societies from the perspectives of financial disadvantaged family in Japan.



Q2. How did your GPJS experience help you in getting your current position?

—In the selection process, it was recognised that I have conducted my research in the multi-discipline community such as GPJS. In Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology, we often collaborate with researchers from different fields. In my laboratory, I engage in research with members from diverse academic background including disability study, social welfare, and psychology. Furthermore, it was recognized that I have learned both domestic and international perspectives from Japanese Studies scholars thorough GPJS. Although my current project focuses on Japan, the perspectives of Japan as a “different culture” is necessary to understand this society. My experience of learning about research trends in Japanese Studies in English was also appreciated by this project.

Q3. Why did you choose the University of Sheffield as your study-abroad destination, and how was your experience there?

— I chose the University of Sheffield because the UK is regarded as a class society and birthplace of poverty studies. It was also attractive for me that School of East Asian Studies was one of the famous research centre for Japanese Studies in the UK. During my study in the UK, I participated in Ph. D. seminars and Japanese language classes, interacting with researchers and postgraduate students. This allowed us to deepen our understanding of each other’s home societies, Japan, China, South Korea, the United States, and others. Although I faced language and culture challenges, finally, it contributed to understanding the UK society well. After coming back to Japan, I feel I am able to see Japanese society through the mirror of the UK.

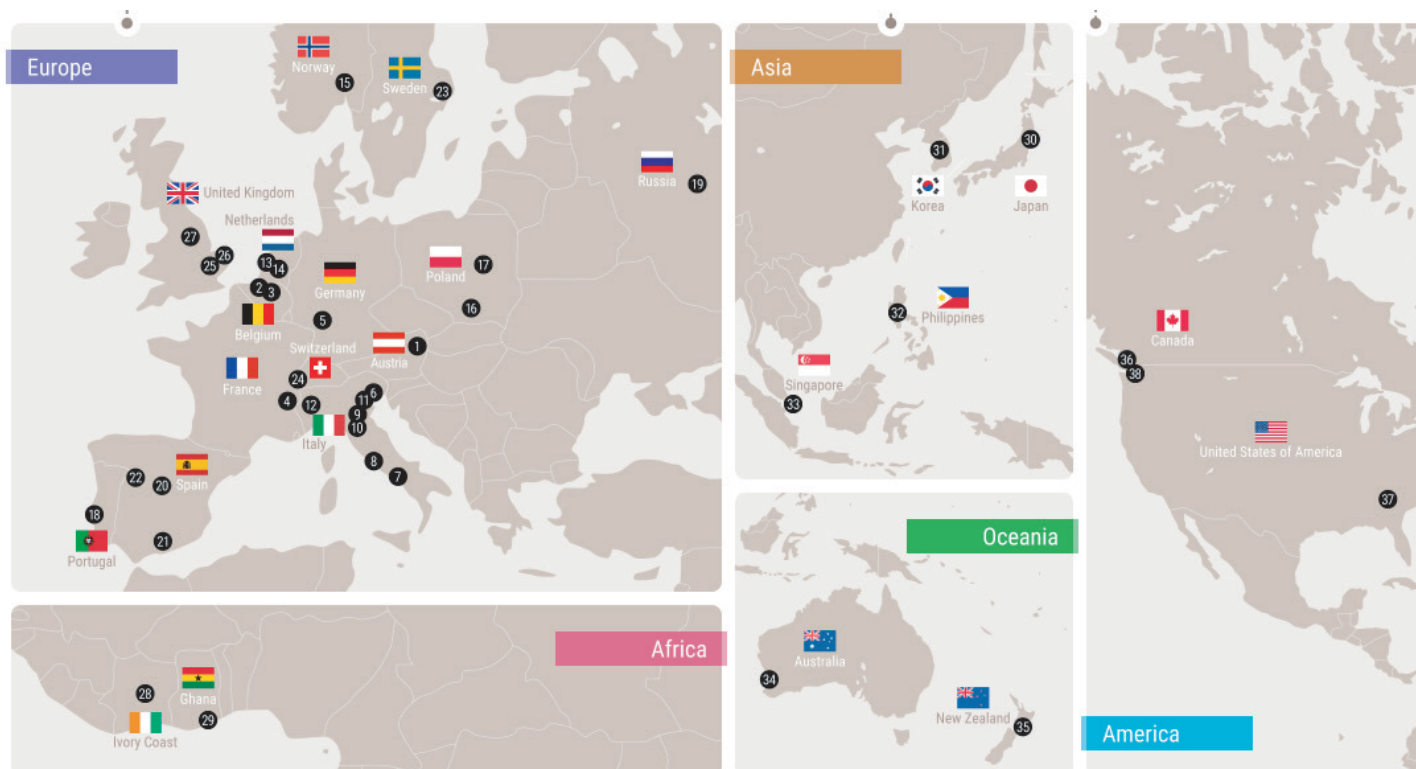
Q4. With your background in Global Japanese Studies, how do you envision building your career as a researcher in the future?

—I hope to be a Japanese scholar who can connect both domestic and overseas research across the fields: anthropology, poverty studies and Japanese Studies. From the perspective of poverty, Japan is a society experiencing unique phenomena within the world, such as “invisible” poverty and social isolation. Or, it can be said that Japan faces these challenges ahead of other societies. I want to clarify the poverty situation through the steady fieldwork and address these global issues from Japanese perspective as I learned in GPJS. Furthermore, as I have a goal to engage in the education of students interested in poverty, I will build a career as an educator going forward.

(Thank you very much. We wish you continued success in developing an even more flexible and interdisciplinary research capacity in your new academic environment, and in your future research and teaching activities!)



THE CURRENT HASEKURA LEAGUE



Europe

1. University of Vienna, Austria
2. Ghent University, Belgium
3. KU Leuven, Belgium
4. University of Grenoble Alpes, France
5. Heidelberg University, Germany
6. Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy
7. L'Orientale University of Naples, Italy
8. Sapienza University of Rome, Italy
9. University of Bologna, Italy
10. University of Florence, Italy
11. University of Padova, Italy
12. University of Turin, Italy
13. Leiden University, Netherlands
14. Utrecht University, Netherlands
15. University of Oslo, Norway
16. Jagiellonian University, Poland
17. University of Warsaw, Poland
18. Nova University Lisbon, Portugal
19. Moscow State University, Russia
20. Autonomous University of Madrid, Spain
21. University of Granada, Spain
22. University of Salamanca, Spain
23. Stockholm University, Sweden
24. University of Lausanne, Switzerland
25. University of Cambridge, UK

26. University of East Anglia, UK

27. University of Sheffield, UK

Africa

28. Alassane Ouattara University, Ivory Coast
29. University of Ghana, Ghana

Asia

30. Tohoku University, Japan
31. Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Korea
32. University of Philippines, Philippines
33. National University of Singapore, Singapore

Oceania

34. Curtin University, Australia
35. Massey University, New Zealand

America

36. University of British Columbia, Canada
37. University of Georgia, USA
38. Western Washington University, USA

For further details, please visit the website of the International Graduate Program for Japanese Studies (GPJS):
<https://gpjs.tohoku.ac.jp/en/>



Letter from the Editor: In 2025, TU actively fosters international and interdisciplinary exchange. Please visit the GPJS YouTube channel and the website (<https://gpjs.tohoku.ac.jp/en/>). Prof. Hiroo Sato, who gave the keynote speaker at the EAJS Japan Conference, retired in March 2025. We would like to express our sincere gratitude for his many years of dedicated contributions, during which he consistently tried to discern the “radiance of the sacred” within each of the GPJS students. (Assoc. Prof. Sachiko Kiyama, GPJS committee member for public relations).

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