

THE JAPAN SCIENTISTS' ASSOCIATION

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2016 Chugoku district symposium “University in crisis and prospect for reform”

The symposium was held on October 8, Hiroshima, to know what is happening in crisis-stricken university and discuss the prospect for get back university for people, where 49 participants, consisting of university faculty and students, gathered.

Prof. Hirate (Hiroshima Univ.) addressed a keynote speech “Higher education evolving under the neoliberalism and knowledge-based economy – towards the ERASMUS (European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) and the Bologna Process”. Many countries including Japan have undergone the collapse in university education due to neoliberalism, he says. Reform of higher education in Europe aimed guarantee of free choice of learning place was built into market principle under the name of knowledge based economy. It is in essence to subjugate knowledge production to economy, though most of involved university staff are unaware that they are encroached on their regions. The professor stressed that it is necessary to ask again “what is university?”

One of participants addressed a question if it is possible to pronounce that “coexistence”, the traditional concept of European university has changed in nature according to globalization, for which a university teacher hail, a German, made a comment that even in Germany the way of being of university underwent an extreme change and the *raison d'être* is reconsidered.

Prof. Nakatomi (Okayama Univ.) gave a report on present university policy and academic freedom and university autonomy by illustrating the latest information about nationwide cases, and called for rebuilding university for nation. In association with the report, participants from Shimane University and Hiroshima Shudo University commented on the adoption of quarter system, which is not consistent with systematic acquisition of learning, reinforcement of administrative structure linked with financial aid to private educational institution for private universities, and the constriction based on quantitative estimate of education system. From the floor there was a voice that the recent university policy is worst as a university governance, viewing that it forces too much things on universities though reduces financial supports.

In his speech “Considering the Japanese Government’s reason of free higher education” Prof. Tsukada (Yamaguchi Univ.) pointed out the problem of Japanese higher education with high tuition and criticized that the scholarship is actually only school loans, expressing his thought that education with the aim to foster each person’s ability to build and maintain society should be social cooperative activity, necessities and stakes to do that should be borne by society, and expenses for higher and university educations need to be gratuitous. The professor finally reported students’ signature campaign in Hiroshima, in which they petitioned for tuition reduction and establishment of benefits type scholarship, explaining the students have a hard time to complete a course of study.

In the report of Mr. Hamada (Japan Agency for Marine-Earth Science and Technology) on rapidly progressing military-academia joint research, he pointed out that the military-academic joint research is placed as a part of policies pursued by the Abe Cabinet seeking for prosperous country and strong army and the Japanese large capital. He stressed that working in cooperation with army is the worst act of driving university into crisis.

Should science be allowed to serve the military? — A lecture & symposium held by the Japanese Coalition against Military Research in Academia

Military research (joint military-academia research) is threatening to demonstrate rapid growth at universities and research institutions under the administration of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. This is a part of the current government’s policy initiatives aimed at making Japan a war-capable country and promoting arms exports. The Japanese Coalition against Military Research in Academia (hereinafter, the Coalition) was set up on September 30, 2016, with the object of stepping up campaigns against military-academia joint research.

The Coalition is a network of 21 groups—including the association for a signature-collecting campaign against military research in academia, the association against military research at universities, the Association for the Verification of Inhuman Conduct by Japanese Researchers and Health Care Professionals during the War, the Japan Scientists’ Association—and about 150 scientists and citizens. The goal is to provide a platform for mutual interactions and information exchange among its member groups and individuals.

A meeting titled “Should science be allowed to serve the military?”—comprising a lecture session (part one) and a symposium session (part two)—was held at Meiji Gakuin University in Tokyo on the night of October 28, one month after the Coalition was formed, to commemorate its inauguration. About 100 people attended the meeting despite the inclement weather.

During the lecture session (part one), Masakatsu Yamazaki, professor emeritus of the history of science with the Tokyo Institute of Technology, gave a talk entitled “Pacifism of Japan’s scientists, its ‘principle’ and ‘pride.’”

The Science Council of Japan, an organ representing Japanese scientists, passed a resolution in April, 1950, the year that the Korean War broke out, to “express a determination never to engage in scientific research aimed at war.” It also adopted a resolution, a “statement never to engage in research for military purposes,” in October 1967, after it was learned that an International Conference on the

Physics of Semiconductors, held in Japan in the previous year, had been funded partially by the U.S. military.

Yamazaki said that those two statements came against the background of the thoughts of the nuclear physicist Yoshio Nishina, a man who proposed an international control of nuclear power after he personally toured and witnessed the utter devastation of Hiroshima and Nagasaki immediately after the new powerful weapon of the atomic age had been used on these cities. He also said the statements were rooted in a bitter remorse of scientists who had cooperated in military research during the wartime.

He said scientists are facing a mounting danger today of being dragged again into cooperation in war through military research under the government's Innovative Science & Technology Initiative for Security grant system, in the light of the latter's source of funding (the Ministry of Defense) and context (embodiment of the National Security Strategy that was approved by the Cabinet on December 17, 2013, under the Abe administration). He explained how the SCJ resolutions remain relevant today.

Yamazaki also pointed out that there were very few students among the audience across the lecture venue. He presented a challenge for the future by saying, "Given a major gap that exists between the generation that experienced that war and generations with no such experience, there should be more opportunities for us to talk to young people, exchange views with them and deepen thoughts together."

Remarks by three campaign leaders opened the symposium session (part two).

Satoru Ikeuchi is professor emeritus of astrophysics at Nagoya University and acts as a co-chief organizer of the Coalition. Ikeuchi pointed out the number of applications during the current year to the Innovative Science & Technology Initiative for Security grant system dropped by half from the previous fiscal year. He said he believes that scientists hesitated to apply for that system, which they realized was closely associated with the "war laws."

Satoshi Ihara is professor emeritus of the history of science at Tohoku University. He is also secretary-general of the Japan Scientists' Association. He said that he was attending every month, in the capacity of an observer, the meetings of the SCJ committee on security issues and academic research, which was discussing how scientists should relate to military research. He emphasized how important it is for scientists and citizens to continue raising their voices to prevent the pledge of Japan's academic circles, which denied military research, from backing down.

The head of the Network against Japan Arms Trade (NAJAT), Koji Sugihara, referred to a connection between military-academia joint research and arms export. He talked about the Japan International Aerospace Exhibition, which was held in Tokyo in October 2016 and was virtually a trade fair of weapons. He also called for citizens' action to prevent Japanese businesses from becoming "merchants of death."

The remarks by the three panelists were followed by discussions that involved Yamazaki, the speaker in the lecture session, and members of the audience. In referring to the fact that university workers were slow in opening campaigns, there was much talk about a need for, and the effectiveness of, encouragement to be offered to universities by students, their parents, alumni associations, citizens of neighborhood communities and other people.

The reader is referred to the Coalition's website (<http://no-military-research.jp>) for latest updates on military-academia joint research.

ACTIVITIES OF RESEARCH COMMITTEES AND GROUPS

The JSA headquarters organizes a number of research committees and groups undertaken on a nationwide scale, which are encouraging the members across the country

1) RESEARCH MISCONDUCT AND MILITARY RESEARCH: PILES OF ISSUES

THE COMMITTEE OF SCIENTISTS' RIGHTS

Recently, there have been happening many cases of research misconduct which are picked up by media. Following up the sectional meeting held at the 20th bi-annual Comprehensive Science Study Convention (CSSC), we have hosted the D-4 sectional meeting in the 21st CSSC (September 2-4, 2016, Kyoto). Reported were countermeasures based on analysis of facts and backgrounds, international movements, so that we provide opportunity to revisit to consider significance of “Report on scientists’ rights, status, and ethics of the 38th national assembly of JSA (2007)”..

Keynote report by Eisuke Enomoto (Kindai Univ.) who has been writing many books and dispatching information on research misconducts was followed by 5 reports including defamation suit case for accusing research misconduct by top of Tohoku University, voluntary establishment of series of lectures in university aimed at getting rid of research misconduct, overall trend in reports on newspapers, and international trends. Active Q&A took place subsequently. When systematic cover up is done by the involved organization, scientific society, external fund for the study, etc., investigation of the case becomes difficult and such bodies continue to be corrupted. It means that scientists create cause of mistrust by people toward science. Similar cases have been happening at Okayama Univ., Hirosaki Univ., as well as Tohoku Univ.

Importance of putting the research misconducts of top of organizations right was pointed out in discussion. We have recognized expectation to JSA to deal with the issues.

We have sold 37 'Report's during the CSSC. In the 2nd committee held in Nov. 2016, we have agreed to request cooperation to secretariat of JSA for distribution of the 'Report' as a means for dispatching information of activities of universities and research institutes toward abolishment of research misconduct, and as an activity to oppose to military researches. We have also agreed on the organization and activities of the next term.

(Kiyosato NIU)

2) RELOCATION OF TSUKIJI FISH MARKET CONSIDERED

The research committee of foodstuff problems held a regular meeting inviting Prof. Mikuni (Emeritus Prof., Hiroshima Univ.) as a speaker on December 17.

According to the Professor’s lecture, since mound layering at the new market in Toyosu was found not to have been executed, in September, several problems related to that have surfaced such as the security of pollution of under water and soil contaminated with volatile matters, collusive relationship between the Tokyo government and major general contractors, too much expensive of the government

against pollution, and the construction of the Toyosu market with taking no thought of users' opinions. That is derived from the discussion process subject to relocation the Tokyo government has conducted and the tendency of Democratic Liberal Party legislators in Tokyo Metropolitan Assembly. The assembly has not carried out the checking function. As a citizen of Tokyo he couldn't accept the fact that the construction maintenance cost arose by more than 220 billion yens comparing with 3926 billion yens in 2011.

Wholesale market is not only physical distribution base but an institution to control the balance of safe fresh food supply and demand and set fair prices with publicness. It is desirable to halt the relocation to the new market in Toyosu and return to the discussion on redevelopment of the Tsukiji fish market. To build the consensus for secure and safe market is important, he finally stressed.

2020 Tokyo Olympic Games problem and other hidden facts that citizens are unable to know are increasing. Does not the present parliamentary democracy possess the true checking function?

DISTRICTS' AND BRANCHES' ACTIVITIES

The JSA consists of 47 branches which are grouped into 9 districts, and they are independently and/or cooperatively carrying out their activities in addition to the headquarters' ones

1) THE 13TH NATIONAL CONVENTION OF RESEARCHES ON LOCAL AUTONOMY IN TSUKUBA, IBARAKI

The above titled convention was held at Tsukuba city on the 1st and 2nd of October 2016, under the main theme, "Let us protect life and living by power of cooperation: Let us establish regions and nation where Constitution functions effectively." The conventions have been held every other year under the executive committee comprised of 21 democratic organizations with the secretariat of Jichiroren (the All-Japan Prefectural and Municipal Workers Union). JSA has been a member of the executive committee since the 3rd convention.

The general assembly on the first day commenced with welcoming performance by local unit 'Hitachino Kuni Furusato Taiko' of *taiko* (Japanese drums), followed by a memorial lecture of Genichiro Takahashi, novelist, professor of Meiji Gakuin University, who spoke on the theme, "Redefine democracy." He showed up with casual clothing with sunglasses and compared himself to 'a tuna who dies unless continuing to swim.' He delivered speech without manuscript while walking on the stage, saying that every lecture is *Ichigo-Ichie* (once-in-life opportunity).

The next session was keynote forum which was prepared by the executive committee, imitating a TV program 'Sunday Morning.' There were two parts: Part 1 "The war law and democracy; review of safety and reassurance of people": Part 2 "Living of inhabitants; review of roles of local governments." Testimonies for the Part 1 were members of former SEALDs and Ibaraki branch of *Nouminren* (Japan Family Farmers Movement). In the Part 2, members from a group to protect public kindergarten of Tsuchiura and labor union of village office of Achi reported the latest statuses. Four commentators did comment to each of the reports and attendees sent messages via Twitter, which were shown on the large

screen in the center of the stage. In the evening, a night session was held as preparation for the sectional meetings of the next day.

On the second day, 25 sectional meetings as well as on-the-spot sectional meeting were held. JSA undertook organizing the 3rd sectional meeting (issues of waste). We had attendance of Hiroyuki Sakamoto, lawyer, secretary-general of *gomibenren* (association of lawyers who work for solutions of garbage issues) as an advisor. About 40 participants of workers and law makers of municipalities, and common inhabitants have actively discussed and exchanged opinions. The Miyagi branch of JSA has reported on issues of radio-active wastes. The cumulative total number of participants of the convention was about 2,200.

2) SMALL TALK MEETING IN OKAYAMA

On October 4 the small talk club of the Okayama branch held a regular meeting, where Prof. Karikome (Shujitsu Univ.) delivered a lecture on Japanese medieval history. The professor first explained that Japanese historical science is heavily affected by Western Europe commencing with Germany, on the other hand, Japan conducts a worldwide rare synthetic research including world history, and second the feature of Japanese medieval history. In his lecture impressive were the following points: a) Japan at the medieval times formed the structure of nation with uncertain power's whereabouts, for *kuge* (imperial court nobility), temples and shrines, and the samurai class existed together; b) Japan in those days was a keen competitive society unlike with society in ancient times or Edo period. Society different from the one with centralized government or the one where people treasure conformity as both now imaged in general had ever existed in Japan. That fact gives us a material to objectively examine what our present society should be, in which the meaning to learn history lies, he says.

3) 2016 HOKKAIDO SCIENCE SYMPOSIUM HELD

The Hokkaido branch held 2016 Hokkaido science symposium on October 30 at Hokkaido University as the semicentennial event of the branch.

Session 1: *Health hazard caused by ultralow- and low-frequency sounds and radio wave*

a) Ms. Kato "Health effect by radio wave and its immediate source"

Her electromagnetic hypersensitivity led her to study this issue. She explained the measure for electromagnetic wave in Europe and other areas, and the current status and effects of smart meter propelled to introduce without due measures and campus wireless LAN.

b) Mr. Matsui "Health effect due to low-frequency sound – perception through vestibular organ and superior canal dehiscence syndrome"

He illustrated stimulus arising from low-frequency sound and perception with low-frequency noise problem emanated from elevated bridge. Superior canal dehiscence syndrome is a recently seen disturbance of the inner ear. It is a disorder in the vestibular organ having cases of dizziness and nystagmus, found in inhabitants near the public infrastructure such as wind turbine, road and railway traffic and so on. He proposed an introduction of new index for low-frequency sound assessment.

c) Mr. Yamada "Measure of sound of existing Ishikari wind mill and health hazard"

Complaints on noise are growing along with the increase of power generation by wind. Due to the measure by the Hokkaido branch research group, ultralow-frequency sound in and out wind mill causality's house was detected. As to the health hazard in Eastern Izu, with the result of epidemiological investigation, he explained that 70 % of somniphathists changed for the better through night stop for three near wind mills and frequency reduction by 40 % for two, and announced that the Japan Federation of Bar Associations has proposed an epidemiological investigation on damages caused by long duration exposure.

d) Mr. Ichikawa "How to wrestle with wind turbine hazards – the possibility and issue of legal channels"

We may take mediation by pollution investigation committee and lawsuit as legal channels. In the case of wind electricity mediation in Ehime Pref. he was involved in, the requester had a result of stopping the construction of wind mill by medical establishment of causality with health damage measuring low-frequency sound in view of the effect of resonance and the lay of the land.

Session 2: TPP and people's life in Hokkaido

e) Mr. Mishima "The target of TPP and its effect to agriculture and eating habit"

The basic principle of TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) is the promise to provide equal national treatment and partner country most-favored-nation treatment to partner country. In case that unfavorable treatment occurred, partner country has the right to file a complaint to international arbitral institution due to an ISDS (investor-state dispute settlement), and the possibility to win is high, thus food security and farming are destroyed. The speaker asserts, although the Government maintains the gross national income increases according to the furthering of Japanese companies' foreign investments and domestic investments of foreign money, its effectiveness is questionable, and so ratification should be refused.

f) Mr. Sakai "The outcome of TPP and Japanese medical care"

Assuming that the aim of TPP is to Americanize the structure of health insurance and medical care, the speaker talked about the practice status of American medical care. Medical services and insurance are the target of ISDS as well. It would bring about discriminatory high cost medical care and reduce the universal health insurance system. He believes that medical services need to be fairly provided and never trampled upon by the market mechanism.

g) Mr. Mima "TPP and democratic economic legislation"

Social fundamental rights have been cut down under the policy of economic efficiency priority and in the 2000s the government has stopped considering the improvement of people's lives under the name of globalization. He explained that the subject of the TPP agreement is extensive such as farming, insurance, health care, and mutual relief, and so forth, and the TPP would be enforced when ratified and become effective in preference to domestic law built for secure and improvement of people's lives when ratified and enforced.

4) WHY IS THE EMBANKMENT BREAKDOWN REPEATED?

The Fukuoka branch held a lecture meeting "Why is the embankment breakdown repeated?" on 5 November 2016. The content of the lecture was as follows. The river law was revised in 1997, and

the purpose was to add river environment maintenance and conservation. It was obliged to specify concrete maintenance plan by listening to the opinions of local residents.

In order to respond to the citizens' various requests for river's natural environment and riverside space, in addition to "flood control" and "water use", the maintenance and preservation of "river environment" is added as the purpose of river management.

Dam, embankment and other specific development plans, river administrators will decide by hearing the opinion of the heads of local public organizations and local residents.

Although the revised river law asks listening to the opinions of the residents, as the public comments undertaken by ministries and agencies, river administrators are just implementing and even if how many opposing opinion is given they only hear.

Basically the officials of the central government have the power of planning. The officials who do not know the situation at the work site are planning and ordering on the desk. As long as this continues, river administration will not change.

Since the officials who gets a lot of budget is considered to be great the priority is given to dam construction. Therefore the embankment breakdown is repeated. If one gives priority to reinforcement of the embankment that is at risk of bank breakdown and river widening work, the flood dam will be unnecessary. Therefore, strengthening the embankment works will be not performed, and the dam building is exclusively continued. Those who think exactly can realize that water cannot be confined in rivers as a way of flood control. Dam building is more important than the lives of residents, and only small minded officials who want to make a dam increase.

5) LECTURE MEETING "THE POLICY OF NO NUCLEAR PLANT—WHY GERMANY COULD MANAGE TO SUCCEED" HELD

Japan's nuclear power plants gradually are being restarted now five years and nine months after the Fukushima nuclear disaster. One of the questions since the disaster is why the nuclear-free policy has been established in Germany while Japan remains unable to do the same. At this time, I had an opportunity to listen to a lecture titled "Germany's challenge: Japan-Germany comparison on the major transformation of energy policy" at a lecture meeting on November 26, Ootsu City, hosted by the JSA Shiga Branch. The speaker, Prof. Yoshida, Fumikazu, is an expert on environmental economics at Aichi Gakuin University, and is a longtime researcher of the energy policy of Germany.

The first thing that surprised me was that Chancellor Merkel ordered immediate cessation of the seven out of seventeen older nuclear reactors only four days after the Fukushima accident. She next announced her intention to abolish all the reactors and the federal parliament overwhelmingly passed the denuclearization bill. Germany thus broke away with nuclear age as soon as four months after the Fukushima accident.

Prof. Yoshida explained the background of Germany's decision to abandon nuclear energy as follows: 1. accidents are possible even though the probability is near zero, 2. in case of severe accident, there is no way to access the reactor core that scatter high doses of radiation, 3. there is no way for nuclear waste disposal, and 4. development of safe energies such as renewables are well in progress.

Even more interesting was the German view of the Fukushima accident. 1, Sever accidents could happen even in Japan which was believed by the majority of Germans as a super high-tech country, 2. They found that conventional ways of risk assessment do not apply to nuclear power accidents, and 3. We are forcing adverse legacy i.e. nuclear waste down to the future generations. After all, many Germans realized that nuclear power generation was not a morally right way in view of the sustainability of the human society.

This lecture meeting provided a precious opportunity to reconsider the nuclear energy policy of Japan. The details of this lecture is found in Prof. Yoshida's book "Germany's challenge: Japan-Germany comparison on the major transformation of energy policy (in Japanese)" published by Nippon Hyoron Sha, 2015. (G. Komatsu)

6) FUKUOKA STUDY MEETING ON NUCLEAR PROBLEM HELD

Fukuoka study meeting on nuclear problem has held a regular meeting every month. In October the meeting discussed the underestimation problem of the standard seismic vibration proposed by Dr. Shimazaki (Former Chairperson Nuclear Regulation Authority) and in November discussed the arrangement of the problems of Genkai nuclear power plant restart.

The area of Genkai nuclear power plant is known as an area where the occurrence of earthquake is few, but there is no guarantee that this area will not suffer from earthquake disasters. On December 24th Dr. Hida (Prof. Emeritus of Saga Univ.) gave a lecture titled "Active fault in Northern Kyushu and earthquake".

There are two type of earthquake namely the subduction-zone earthquake and the strong local earthquake (inland type earthquake). According to Dr. Handa, the subduction-zone earthquake is caused by a constant speed motion of the plate subduction, so it will occur periodically to a certain extent, but it is very difficult to predict where and when the strong local earthquake will occur.

The latter earthquake energy is smaller by one order of magnitude than the subduction-zone huge earthquake energy. However, since it occurs near the residential area, it is accompanied by severe shaking and often causes serious damage to people and buildings.

The Tottori Chubu Earthquake of October 21, 2016 (M6.6) is a strong local earthquake. No active fault had been found near the epicenter before the earthquake and the unknown fault moved. In Kurayoshi city we observed the maximum acceleration of 1494 Gals.

The scale of the earthquake occurred when the Shiroyama fault near the Genkai nuclear plant moved alone is expected to be M7.1, but if the Nagoya fault close to Genkai nuclear plant is linked, it will be around M7.2. The earthquake resistance of Genkai nuclear power plant including the unknown fault origin earthquake is sufficient with this examination criterion vibration (620 Gals)?

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8) 33RD JSA KYUSHU-OKINAWA SYMPOSIUM HELD IN OKINAWA

The symposium "Powers of local governing and residents change the country – transmission from Okinawa-Kyushu" was held by Kyushu-Okinawa district at December 10 at Okinawa University.

Session 1: *The problems of Henoko, Okinawa, and security and local governing*

a) Prof. Tokuda (Okinawa branch) "Question about superior court decision in Henoko trial and an issue in the future"

In the "illegal permit lawsuit" where the central government claimed it illegal for the governor of Okinawa, Onaga, to revoke the permission of landfill in Henoko, the Fukuoka superior court on September 16 gave a decision against Okinawa prefecture along with the point for the central government. Prof. Tokuda pointed out the problematical point of the decision that, stirring up people's anxiety, the Japanese government takes priority of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty over the constitution. To take action against such logic it is significant to abolish proclamation in Okinawa under the US military's ruling and the power building from below gaining basic labor rights, education rights, and autonom, he said.

b) Prof. Toyoshima (Fukuoka branch) "Osprey deployment to the Saga airport"

US military requires the deployment of Osprey aircraft to the Saga airport, which the Self-Defense Forces is planning to purchase. The residents and fishermen strongly oppose the deployment. He also reported that fishermen and the government have set up the appointment "not to share in with the Self-Defense-Forces", labor unions and civic groups established Saga liaison meeting against Osprey deployment", and the liaison conducted discussion with local residents and gatherings and demos against Osprey deployment.

c) Prof. Kameyama "The issue points of landfill at Awase tidal land"

Awase tidal land is the largest place in Okinawa where curlews, plovers, scartelaos histophorus and pseudodichotomosiphon constrictus inhabit, just a world treasure. The residents in Okinawa raised a lawsuit to suspend spending public money for reclamation work by state, Okinawa prefecture and Okinawa city, gaining an injunction, however, the work does not stop, and they were defeated in the second lawsuit. The movement faced the reality that they could not stop the reclamation despite winning the suit, but has been a civic movement that shows the future of Okinawa by offering measures for the promotion taking advantage of nature.

Session 2: *A massage from Kyushu-Okinawa to take advantage of local autonomy*

In his talk "The theory of locality extinction and regional policy of prefectural governments – looking toward regional policy built from the standpoint of region", Prof. Iriya (Miyazaki branch) compared policies based on principle of core business in Kyoto and that of nodal system in Oita. In "Reoperation

of Sendai nuclear power plant and renewable energy”, Prof. Yagi (Kagoshima branch) reported the actual status that we cannot block reoperation of the plant despite having elected antinuclear power Governor, by which opinion is divided over the evaluation of the governor. Dr. Morinaga (Fukuoka branch) expressed his opinion from his experience in the social action program that professional teachers besides volunteer need to be employed taking budgetary steps. Prof. Kawauchi (Fukuoka branch) talked about children’s cafeteria for poorly eating children, and indicating that it is important to bring up the image each child wants to be and lead him/her to the image by assisting in learning.

9) REGULAR OPEN MEETING: “STUDYING LANGUAGE —THE CHINESE LANGUAGE WORLD” IN TOYAMA

The above regular meeting of Toyama Branch of JSA, open to general citizens too, was held on December 3 (Sat) for two hours from 14:00 to 16:00. A lecture entitled “Studying Language —Chinese Language World” was given by Dr. Fukuda Sho, Associate Professor at Institute of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Toyama. The participants totaled 20 including the regular members and general public at a training room of the Toyama Prefectural Civic Hall.

We learned that linguistic examination opens our eyes to various sides of the language even of our daily use. We became aware of significance of “subject”, for one thing. We also took notice that different verbs for similar actions such as “close” and “shut” are used under different circumstances in a narrow sense. Though languages naturally change with time, this lecture reminded me afresh of the “corruption of the Japanese language”.

Unlike Japanese, Chinese is a unique language called isolating language that lacks case markers and conjugations which are essential to the Japanese language. By easy-to-follow explanation and model pronunciation, we also learned that modern Chinese was a monosyllabic tonal language with tones differentiating meanings of the same syllables. It was also shown, among other things, that we might find by close look at the Chinese characters, or kanjis, that some characters carried different meanings between Chinese and Japanese.

In the free conversation time after the meeting the speaker mixed together with attendants and he talked about specific themes and methodology of Chinese study only Japanese researchers could conduct because of being not native Chinese speaker.

The talk was interesting also to the members of different research fields and to the citizens who joined the meeting in response to our call. Our Toyama Branch would continue to promote our activity through the regular open meeting together with the public. (Fujita Kumiko)