

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

DIJ History and Humanities Study Group



TUESDAY, 11 June 2013, 18.30 h

Simone Müller, Zurich University

Intellectuals and the 'Happiness' of the People ***The Debate on Arishima Takeo's*** ***'One Manifesto' and its Legacy***

In the 1920s a discourse on the role of intellectuals for society and their relationship to the masses arose in Japan. This discourse, triggered by the strengthening of Marxism as a consequence of the October Revolution and the ensuing emergence of the Proletarian literary movement, is known under the term *chishikijin ron*. Its beginning is generally set in 1922, with the so called 'Debate on Arishima Takeo's article "Sengen hitotsu" (One Manifesto). In his manifesto, Arishima formulated a renunciation of the possibilities of the bourgeois intellectual to abdicate his own class, to join the proletarian movement and to write for the proletariat. Arishima's article was read as a denial of the intellectuals' potential to effectively engage in class-struggle and precipitated a vibrant debate on the social mission of writers and the relationship of intellectuals and the working class. The whole debate made clear that two competing groups opposed each other: On the one side Marxists, on the other side bourgeois liberal humanists. The debate is of central significance for the self-referential intellectual discourse in Japan, as it raised basic questions about the social function of intellectuals and their responsibility for the people, or, to put it more poignantly, for their "happiness". In my presentation I will contextualize the debate and trace its legacy, thus drawing a picture of the ideological struggles in the intellectual field of inter- and postwar Japan.

PD Dr **Simone Müller** studied Japanese and Chinese Studies as well as Philosophy at the University of Zurich, at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and at Doshisha University. She is currently working at the Asia-Orient-Institute of the University of Zurich, teaching and conducting research on Japanese literature and intellectual history. Her post-doctoral thesis (Habilitation) *Torn Consciousness – Repetition and Difference in the Intellectual Discourse of Inter- and Postwar Japan* [Das zerrissene Bewusstsein: Wiederholung und Differenz im japanischen Intellektuellendiskurs (chishikijin ron) der Zwischen- und Nachkriegszeit] is an analysis of the self-referential discourse of literates on the role and responsibility of intellectuals in 20th century Japan, in light of European, namely French, concepts of intellectualism.

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is a forum for young scholars including Ph.D. candidates in the field organized by Kristina Iwata-Weickgenannt, Susanne Klien and Torsten Weber. All are welcome to attend, but registration (weber@dijtokyo.org) is appreciated.

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