

German Institute for Japanese Studies (DIJ)

DIJ History & Humanities Study Group



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Writing (in) Iwate:

Exploring a Local Literary Scene and its Fiction

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The literary scene in Japan has one strong focal point: Tokyo. From the early 20th century onwards, publishers gathered in the capital, attracting those who aspired to be professional writers from all over the country. Still today, more than 76 percent of all Japanese publishing houses are located in Tokyo according to a recent report of the Japan Book Publishers Association. However, the situation for writers in other regions of Japan seems to have changed significantly as my research on literature in the prefecture of Iwate shows: While my study began with the question whether there was any local literary production in present-day Iwate at all, an on-site exploration yielded that a considerable literary scene actually does exist. Yet, this local literature is mostly overlooked by academia and media. To change this and draw attention to the literary production of Iwate, I dedicated my dissertation to the question what the local literary scene in Iwate and its literature look like.

In the presentation the focus will be put on the literary magazine *Kita no bungaku* [Literature of the North], which I identified as one of the key institutions supporting literature in Iwate. Founded in the 1950s and, after a break of 25 years, continued in 1980, the magazine has been published bi-annually for over thirty years since then. An analysis of this journal can demonstrate how the relationship of local literature vis-à-vis the national scene has developed, but also how the local scene creates its own spaces of literary production. As examples from my analysis will show, some fiction in *Kita no bungaku* discuss contemporary social issues in Japan and offer de-centered perspectives on life in Iwate, which resist plain stereotypes that mark the prefecture as remote and backward periphery.

Tamara Kamerer studied Japanese Studies and German as a Foreign Language in Vienna, Leiden, Halle/Saale and Tokyo (Hosei University). Her fields of interest include Japanese literature, especially 'regional' literature, and popular culture as well as Post-Colonial Studies and Gender Studies. Currently, she teaches undergraduate level courses at the University of Vienna and writes her dissertation.

About:

The DIJ History and Humanities Study Group is a forum open to scholars working on Japan in any field of the humanities. It is organized by Barbara Geilhorn, Torsten Weber and Isaac Gagné. All are welcome to attend, but prior registration online at www.dijtokyo.org or by email (geilhorn@dijtokyo.org) is greatly appreciated.

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