

Kokugakuin Japan Studies

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Editorial Intent

Special Issue: Thinking Through / From Concepts

We are pleased to present the seventh issue of KJS. The journal was founded to disseminate, in English, the research achievements of scholars at Kokugakuin University. Over the previous six issues, we have published articles addressing “Japanese culture” from a variety of perspectives; however, these were translations of studies originally published in Japanese academic journals.

By contrast, the lead article in this issue, by Sasō Mamoru, was written specifically for KJS and appears here for the first time. In recent years, the Organization for the Advancement of Research and Development, an affiliated institute of Kokugakuin University, has been promoting a research project known as Kami Studies (*kamigaku* カミ学). This initiative seeks to revisit the history of phenomena associated with these deities of Japan by incorporating perspectives from cognitive science and cultural evolution. Sasō’s article presents this approach through a concrete case study. Future issues will likely continue to feature research emerging from this project.

Against this backdrop, the present issue adopts the theme “Thinking Through / From Concepts” and includes two related articles.

Anzai’s article focuses on the work of Tawada Yōko 多和田葉子, an author highly acclaimed both within and beyond Japan. It examines the short story “The Woman Who Doesn’t Throw Things Away” (*Sutenai onna* 捨てない女), widely included in Japanese high school textbooks, and develops an analysis from its depiction of garbage to consider Japanese society at the time of the work’s composition (1999) and how that society grappled with waste. In this sense, the article thinks through/from the concept of garbage. Higuchi’s article examines the Human Rights Protection Law (*Jinken hoshōhō* 人権保障法) enacted in Manchukuo to investigate the meaning assigned to the concept of freedom within the state’s structure in Manchuria. Focusing on the historical setting of Manchukuo—long the subject of diverse scholarly debates—the article considers concepts such as “human rights,” “state,” and “freedom” by thinking through/from them. Building on these contributions, this issue also adopts the theme “Reflecting on the Past.” This theme is intended to signify more than simply taking up past events; it also raises the question of consciously reexamining past modes of perception and how the past itself has been viewed.

Just as *Kami Studies* seeks to reconsider the nature of kami rather than treating them as self-evident, *KJS* aspires to provide a forum that reexamines the concept of “Japan” and encourages thinking from that concept. We hope that the three articles presented here will stimulate further discussion and inquiry.

KJS Editorial Committee

Included Articles

- Sasō Mamoru 笹生衛 (Professor, Department of Shinto Culture, Faculty of Shinto Studies), “Nihon bunka no keisei to shukyō: Bunka shinkaron kara mita kodai tōgoku no chiiki shinkō to sono hen’yō” 日本文化の形成と宗教—文化進化論から見た古代東国の地域信仰とその変容—, 書き下ろし
- Anzai Shinji 安西晋二 (Associate Professor, Department of Japanese Literature, Faculty of Letters), “‘Gomi’ no akuchuariti: Tawada Yōko ‘Sutenai onna’ o torimaku shakai jokyō” 「ゴミ」のアクチュアリティー—多和田葉子「捨てない女」を取り巻く社会状況—, Kokugakuin daigaku kyōikugaku kenkyūshitsu kiyō 國學院大學教育学研究室紀要 58 (2024), pp. 19–31.
- Higuchi Hidemi 樋口秀実 (Professor, Department of History, Faculty of Letters), “Manshū koku ni okeru ‘kokka’ to ‘jyū’: ‘Jinken hoshō hō’ no seitei o megutte” 満洲国における「国家」と「自由」—「人権保障法」の制定をめぐる—, Kokugakuin zasshi 國學院雑誌 123, no. 3 (2022), pp. 1–22.