

THE JAPAN ASSOCIATION FOR ASIAN STUDIES (JAAS)

1. Outline

The Japan Association for Asian Studies (JAAS) was established on May 5, 1953 for the purpose of conducting and publishing results of theoretical and empirical research centering on politics and economy in Asia. JAAS was not the only academic society that was involved in Asian studies at that time, but it was unique in the sense that it was politically neutral while most other similar organizations were deeply influenced by specific ideology, against the background of the political atmosphere in Japan in the early 1950s.

The inaugural statement of JAAS says, “It is unquestionable common knowledge that the analysis of Asian affairs, including not only Chinese affairs but also Korean, Indian and other southern areas’ affairs, is of immense importance for Japan. Nevertheless, the Japanese have not been so keen on studying theoretically and empirically the current political and economic problems of Asia, compared with their effort to study Asian history and classics. Therefore, we wish to mend this big defect in Japanese academia by combining the efforts of scholars, bureaucrats, and businessmen. By doing so, we can not only contribute to the progress of scholarship but also fulfill the immediate needs of society.” This spirit has been alive throughout the 71 years’ history of JAAS.

In 1957, JAAS was authorized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as a public service corporation (*koeki hojin*). It was one of the few academic associations that are officially permitted as foundational juridical persons (*zaidan hojin*) in Japan. JAAS was registered in 2013 as a general incorporated foundation (*ippan zaidan hojin*) in conjunction with the enforcement of new legislation pertaining to foundations. JAAS celebrated its 70th anniversary in 2023 with many events.

By now, JAAS is the largest academic society specializing in Asian studies.

2. Membership

The membership of JAAS is said to have been only about 40 at the time of its first national meeting at Keio University in 1953. When JAAS celebrated its 30th anniversary in 1983, due to the rise of interest in Asia and the increase of foreign students coming to Japan, the membership expanded impressively. In 1993 it was 800, and in 1999 it surpassed 1,000. JAAS has more than 1,300 members as of August 2017.

JAAS comprises members with a variety of disciplines, including economics, political science, international relations, history, sociology, and anthropology. East Asia,

Southeast Asia and South Asia are the three major regions that JAAS academically covers. Currently about 800 members focus on East Asia, about 400 on Southeast Asia, and about 100 on South Asia, with the rest focusing either on Asia in general, the Asia-Pacific region or other regions. As such, JAAS can be said to more or less center on studies on the East Asian region. However, there has been a rise in the number of members studying Southeast Asia and South Asia in recent years. The JAAS website has also been actively building links with counterparts in Southeast and South Asia along with those in East Asia.

3. Academic Activities

Main activities of JAAS include the JAAS Spring Convention, JAAS Autumn Convention, Regular Seminars, Publications and Prize.

1) JAAS Spring Convention

Having an annual national convention has been the major activity for JAAS (semiannually until 1959). Our national conventions have dealt with contemporary and historical issues in social scientific ways. This academic orientation has become the tradition and culture of JAAS. It has held occasional international symposia with inviting international guest speakers. The annual national conventions usually consist of four types of sessions: free theme sessions, sub-theme sessions for specific topics, plenary sessions, and international sessions in which the presentations and discussions are usually conducted in languages other than Japanese. All the records of the discussions at these sessions are reported in the *JAAS Newsletter*, which is downloadable at the JAAS website.

The recent JAAS Spring Convention held in June, 2024 at Kanagawa University consisted of five individual papers sessions, four organized panels, a plenary session and an international seminar (“Kashiyama Seminar”). Thirty-four presentations were made during the two-day meeting.

The theme of the plenary session was “The Current Stage of the Asian Maritime Order: Gray Zone Conflicts and the Economies,” which comprised the Chair: Mie OBA (Kanagawa University), Presentation 1. Kentaro FURUYA (National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies, Keio University, Japan Coast Guard Academy) “China’s gray zone strategy and response from littoral states”, Presentation 2. Koichi SATO (J.F. Oberlin University) “China’s Maritime Offensive in the East & South China Seas: An Outline”, Presentation 3. Wi Jongjin (Kyushu Sangyo University) “Stabilization of international maritime transport that contributes to the formation of an international order in Asia”,

and Presentation 4. Aki MORI (University of Tsukuba) “China’s view on the military presence of the third parties in the Philippines.”

The theme of the international symposium (“Kashiyama Seminar”) was “An Era of Oppression and Resistance: Will Art and Activism Change Asia?,” which comprised the Moderator: Jun HONNA (Ritsumeikan University), Keynote Speech Speaker 1: HUANG Yuhan (the Rochester Institute of Technology) and Speaker 2: LIN Sun Oo (the co-founder of Tagu Film), Mini Talk (1) “Art Activism in Greater China and Southeast Asia” Speaker: Haruka IHARADA (an independent curator), Mini Talk (2) “The Possibilities of Transnational Activities” Speaker 1: Hnin Htet Htet AUNG (Master’s degree student at Hitotsubashi University’s Graduate School of International and Public Policy) and Speaker 2: Maiko ICHIHARA (Hitotsubashi University), and Discussants: Tomoko AKO (University of Tokyo) and Mario LOPEZ (Kyoto University). The presentations and discussions in this session were conducted in English.

The themes of four organized panels were “Organized Panel 1. Quantitative Text Analysis in Contemporary China Studies: Bridging Past and Present,” “Organized Panel 2. Perspectives and Policies Toward Japan Among Taiwan’s Postwar Leaders: Focus on the Kuomintang,” “Organized Panel 3. Revolution and the Transformation of Chinese Society: From the Perspective of Everyday Politics” and “Organized Panel 4. Publication and National Consciousness of the Kurds, ‘People without a Nation State.’”

2) JAAS Autumn Convention

Since 1988 JAAS has added two annual regional conferences – the Eastern Japan Conference and the Western Japan Conference. These two annual regional conferences developed to the JAAS Autumn Convention, since 2015.

The recent JAAS Autumn Convention held in October, 2024 at Kagawa University in Kagawa Prefecture in Shikoku consisted of six individual papers sessions, a special round table and a plenary session. Twenty-four presentations were made at the convention.

The theme of the special round table was “Masayoshi Ohira’s Diplomacy for China and East Asian.” which comprised the Moderator: Tetsushi TAKAHASHI (Nikkei Inc.), Keynote Speech: Masaya INOUE (Keio University), Panelists: Mie OBA (Kagawa University), Sotaro SUZUKI (Nikkei Inc.), Yuta YOKOYAMA (Graduate School, University of Tokyo), Xianfen XU (Hiroshima City University). This special round table was funded by “the OHIRA Foundation” and open to non-members including the citizens of Takamatsu City and Kagawa Prefecture.

The theme of the plenary session was “Reexamining ‘Overseas Chinese’ and

‘Chinese Nationals’ through the Lens of Immigration and Border Control: Case Studies of Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan,” which comprised the Chair: Shohei YAO (Notre Dame Seishin University), Presentation 1: Yohei MOCHIDA (Kanagawa University) “Development of the Colonial Police Organization and Its Surveillance System in Singapore in the First Half of the 20th Century: Focusing on the Linkage with the Development of the Overseas Chinese Economy”, Presentation 2: Hiroshi MURAI (Kanagawa University) “Immigration Control and the Fate of ‘Illegal Immigrants’ in 1950s Hong Kong”, Presentation 3: Yuki TSURUZONO (Kagawa University) “The Emergence of ‘Displaced Chinese’: A Tentative Analysis on the Politics of International Migration in Post-War East Asia”, and Discussants: Nobuto YAMAMOTO (Keio University), Tomoyoshi DOI (Meiji Gakuin University), Toru KURATA (Rikkyo University).

3) Quarterly seminars

JAAS has resumed its quarterly seminars since July 2010. The purpose of these quarterly seminars is to provide young scholars with chances to brush up their studies by presenting in front of more experienced scholars.

4) Publications

Publishing academic journals and books has composed one of the main activities of JAAS. JAAS publishes a quarterly journal *Aziya Kenkyu (Asian Study)*, which has entered its 63rd year in 2017 (Referee 1: the back cover of the recent journal) . The journal is one of the most important journals in the field of Asian studies in Japan. The journal is edited by the editorial committee of 19 JAAS members, and is known as an established peer-reviewed journal. All manuscripts submitted to the journal are refereed by anonymous referees appointed by the editorial committee. Besides the editorial committee, the book review committee consisting of 11 JAAS members compiles book reviews. All the contents of the 63 volumes of the journal are available electronically at the JAAS website.

Besides the quarterly journal, JAAS had a unique system of publishing monographs on China studies. The monographs published through this system are entitled the *Contemporary China Study Series*. Thirty-eight volumes of this series were published during 1964-2001. However, JAAS has suspended the publication of this series since 2002, because of the termination of financial support from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The full texts of six volumes are available electronically at the JAAS website.

JAAS has published two edited series of Asian studies. The first series was published when it marked its 40th anniversary in 1993. It has four volumes entitled *Koza Gendai Aziya (Lectures on Contemporary Asia)*, consisting of Vol. 1 *Nashonarizumu to kokumin kokka* (Nationalism and Nation State), edited by Kenji TSUCHIYA, Vol. 2 *Kindaika to kozo henka* (Modernization and Structural Transformation), edited by Katsuji NAKAGANE, Vol. 3 *Minshuka to keizai hatten* (Democratization and Economic Development), edited by Yoshiyuki HAGIWARA, and Vol. 4 *Chiiki shisutemu to kokusai kankei* (Regional Systems and International Relations), edited by Kenichiro HIRANO.

The second series was published in 2008 when JAAS reached its 55th anniversary. It comprises the three-volume *Gendai Aziya Kenkyu (Contemporary Asian Studies)*, consisting of Vol. 1 *Ekkyo* (Transborders), edited by Akio TAKAHARA, Keiko T. TAMURA and Yukihito SATO, Vol. 2 *Shimin shakai* (Civil Society), edited by Chiharu TAKENAKA, Nobuo TAKAHASHI and Nobuto YAMAMOTO, and Vol. 3 *Seisaku* (Policy), edited by Yasuhiro TAKEDA, Tomoo MARUKAWA and YAN Shanping. As the choice of the topics explicitly shows, the JAAS has paid close attention to both contemporary and historical issues and changing academic fashions.

JAAS publishes a semi-annual newsletter, *JAAS Newsletter*. The purpose of a semi-annual newsletter is to provide a regular channel to exchange news and views about JAAS and Asian studies for JAAS members. The latest newsletter was Vol. 46. JAAS newsletters have rich contents about JAAS and Asian studies.

5) Prize

JAAS launched the JAAS Prize for the Best Article in Asian Studies in 2003. The purpose of the Prize is to encourage Asian studies by the young members of JAAS. The article to be awarded the Prize is selected from those published in *Aziya Kenkyu*, and those published in other refereed journals, which have been recommended by JAAS members.

The latest winner of the Prize was Hideki KIKUCHI for “The Relationship between the Chinese Nationalist Party’s Wartime Mobilization and Local Societies during the Sino-Japanese War: Focusing on the Loyal Patriotic Army of the Yangtze Delta Area” in 2024.

4. Institutional Reform

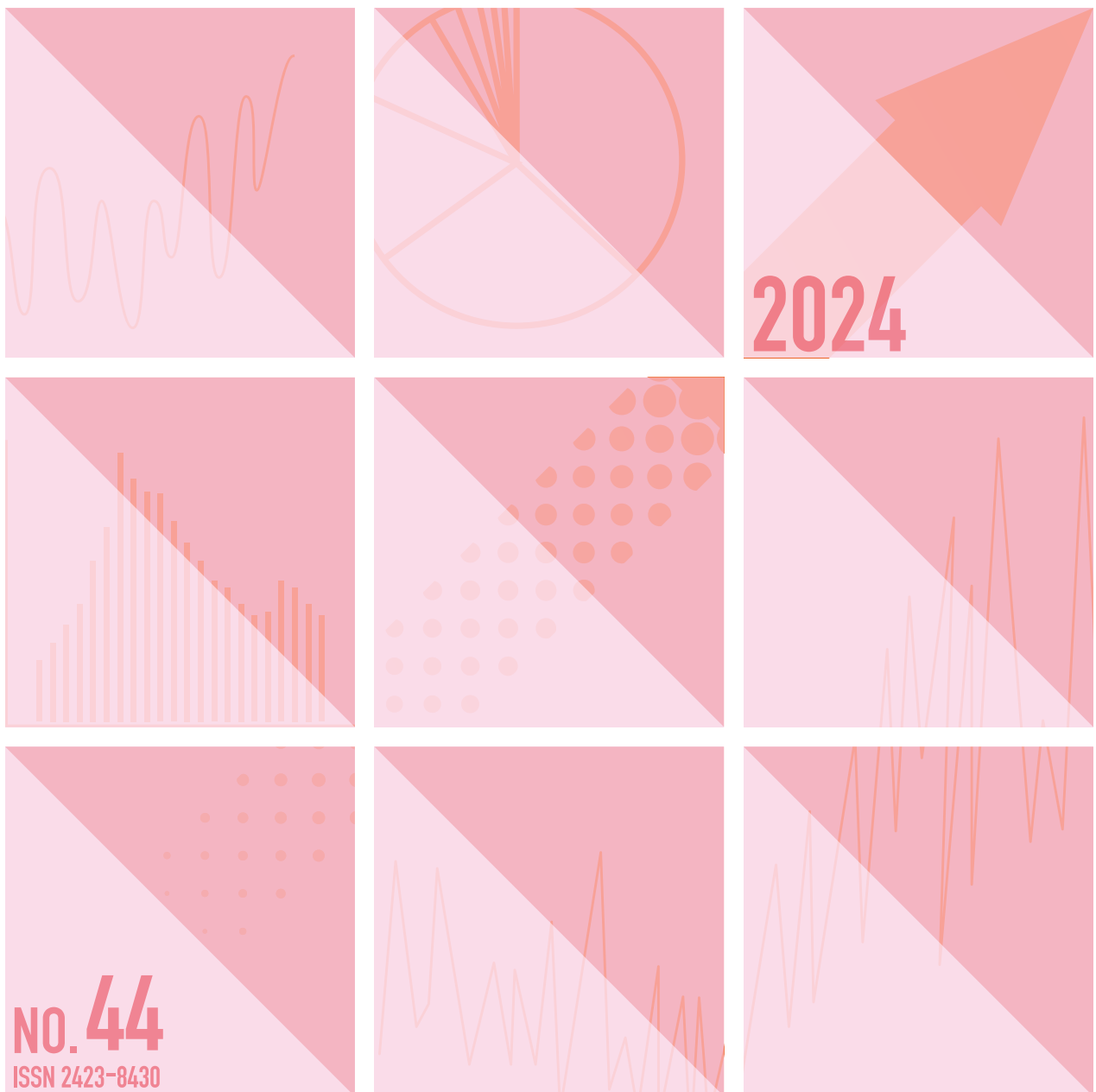
The Japanese government started to reform public corporations in 2000, and

JAAS, as one of those public service corporations, started its institutional reform. In 2005, the board of directors of JAAS agreed upon a new corporate charter, which reflected the electoral process of directors. To streamline administrative work and spend more time on academic activities, JAAS has transferred some of its administrative work, such as services toward members, to a non-profit organization. Besides these, JAAS has drastically improved its websites so that the general public can easily access the publications and activities of JAAS.

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