

Tateiwa Shinya (1960 to 2023) and International Vision

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Tateiwa Shinya was internationally active and demonstrated exceptional leadership on the global stage. It is difficult to speak about Tateiwa in the past tense. However, it is both a privilege and a responsibility for those of us who had the opportunity to work with him internationally to highlight his relatively under-discussed global contributions. That is the purpose of this essay.

Tateiwa's international presence was profoundly evident at the memorial event held in Kyoto on January 27, 2024. Researchers from South Korea and Taiwan paid tribute to him, reading messages of condolence. These included Professor Chong Hee Kyong (Gwangju University), chair of the International Committee of the Korean Society of Disability Studies, and Professor Chou Yi-Chun (Soochow University), president of the Taiwan Society of Disability Studies. Professor Zhang Wanhong (Wuhan University) from China sent a special poem incorporating the Chinese characters of Tateiwa Shinya's name (立岩真也). As he was unable to attend due to medical treatment, I translated and read his memorial message on his behalf. Sadly, Prof. Zhang passed away in June 2024. The memorial website for Tateiwa contains Prof. Zhang's message and messages from Armenia, France, Spain, and the USA.

Thus, Tateiwa was deeply connected to an international network of scholars and activists. This was both the result of (a) his active efforts and (b) a natural gathering of global colleagues inspired by his outstanding achievements. A prime example of this intersection is the East Asia Disability Studies Forum, an international seminar on disability studies. Originally initiated as an exchange between Japan and South Korea by Prof. Chong and Tateiwa - who had been her supervisor during her graduate studies at Ritsumeikan University - the forum later expanded to include China and Taiwan, becoming a permanent international seminar in East Asia. As the forum's founder, Tateiwa played a central role throughout its development.

This explains why a memorial video created by Prof. Chong, expressing her deep admiration for Tateiwa, was played at the opening ceremony of the East Asia Disability Studies Forum 2023, held in Seoul on October 27, 2023. It also explains why the Kyoto memorial gathering was

attended by participants from South Korea and Taiwan and why a heartfelt message was received from China.

Prof. Chou stated, “Professor Tateiwa played an important role in fostering exchanges between Japan and East Asian countries such as South Korea, Taiwan, and China, leaving an indelible mark on Taiwan’s disability studies community and symbolizing an eternal academic star.”

Similarly, Prof. Zhang expressed, “Chinese disability researchers are especially grateful for his engagement in discussions on ‘East Asian Perspectives on Disability’ and his support for Chinese disability scholars. He helped us organize the International Symposium on Disability, Sexuality, and Gender in Asia in Kyoto, the results of which were published by Routledge in 2023. He even generously hosted my colleague at his home in Kyoto during a Japan Foundation-sponsored study tour. Now that Prof. Tateiwa has left us, it is our duty to ensure that the work he started is carried on by future generations.”

Prof. Zhang's words also remind me of the times I was invited to stay at Tateiwa’s homes in Matsumoto and Kyoto. Although we exchanged letters during my study period at the Institute of Social Studies in the Netherlands in the mid-1990s, our first in-person meeting took place during Tateiwa’s time at Shinshu University. Recalling my visit from Yokohama to discuss the “Invitation to Disability Studies” project (the first book on disability studies in Japan to be published in 1999), Tateiwa wrote: “I was then living in Matsumoto City, three hours away from Tokyo, but I remember that he visited me at my home, stayed overnight, and we talked about the project.” (<http://www.arsvi.com/ts/20100095.htm>). I believe this was in 1996, shortly after my return to Japan. Initially, I had not planned to stay overnight, but as our conversation deepened, Tateiwa insisted that I do so. The next morning, I still vividly remember him cycling down the hill in front of his house with his young son riding on the back of his bicycle. Seeing his son deliver a dignified speech at the memorial service in Kyoto a quarter of a century later brought this scene back to me with remarkable clarity.

Reflecting on Tateiwa’s defining characteristics, I believe his openness was closely linked to his international outlook. Of course, these two aspects overlapped. As Prof. Zhang described, his openness was an “open-door and welcoming” attitude. When I was invited to stay in Matsumoto, it was our first time meeting in person. Similarly, he once allowed a graduate student under his supervision to live in his home in Kyoto. This openness was also evident in *arsvi.com*, a vast

repository of knowledge that he built and maintained. As noted in Tateiwa's own entry, this platform was open – sometimes excessively so – but always dedicated to sharing information.

There are countless examples of people naturally gravitating toward him and the international connections that developed as a result. For instance, looking at the members of the International Committee of the Japan Society of Disability Studies (JSDS) that I chair, both Dr. Astghik Hovhannisyan from Armenia and Dr. Anne-Lise Mithout from France became associated with the society through their connections with Tateiwa.

Dr. Hovhannisyan recalled: "I first met Professor Tateiwa in 2019 when I was a foreign researcher at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in Kyoto, but even before that, I had read his books and papers and was greatly influenced by them. Not only was he a brilliant researcher and thinker, but he also had a gift for bringing people together. I have remained in contact with the colleagues he introduced me to." (<http://www.arsvi.com/ts/ts-m.htm>).

Dr. Mithout similarly expressed: "Your books have been an inspiration to me since I started my research. I am deeply grateful to have met you in person in 2016, learned so much from you, and been invited to join the Institute of Ars Vivendi. Our time together in Kyoto was brief, but it will stay with me forever." (<http://www.arsvi.com/ts/ts-m.htm>). In 2024, Dr. Mithout published "*Le cœur et le droit – le handicap dans la société japonaise* (The Heart and the Law – Disability in Japanese Society) in French and its English edition is set for release in 2026.

Personally, I feel that I may have contributed in some small way to the development of Tateiwa's international vision through my work at the Institute of Ars Vivendi. Tateiwa was a great benefactor to me. In April 2012, he invited me to join the Research Center for Ars Vivendi at Ritsumeikan University, which he had founded. Ten years later, in December 2022, when we had to search for my successor, he wrote on the institute's mailing list, reflecting on 2012: "All I remember is that I felt happy that Mr. Nagase was available, and I thought that was good enough." I was the one who truly felt happy, as my contract at the University of Tokyo's Graduate School of Economics had ended in March 2012, and I had not yet found a new position. Tateiwa's offer was a godsend. I am deeply grateful to have worked with him for a total of 11 years – four as a visiting professor and seven as an eminent research professor.

At the Institute of Ars Vivendi, I was primarily responsible for international activities and had the opportunity to closely observe Tateiwa's active engagement in international efforts. He was highly supportive of the East Asia Disability Studies Forum, which was my primary focus at

the institute. Tateiwa attended all the seminars held until 2022 – three in South Korea, three in Japan, two in China, one in Taiwan, and three online (when Japan hosted during the COVID-19 pandemic). He fully supported the expansion of the initially bilateral Korea-Japan Disability Studies Forum into the East Asia Disability Studies Forum in 2015, with the inclusion of China.

In December 2017, we traveled together to Wuhan, China to attend an international conference hosted by Prof. Zhang, a leading figure in the Chinese disability studies community. The purpose of this visit was to strengthen ties with our Chinese colleagues. Taiwan's Kao Ya-Yu, a member of the International Committee of JSDS and a doctoral student under Tateiwa's supervision then, also accompanied us. Taiwan had officially joined the forum in 2016, during a seminar held in Ibaraki, Osaka, and hosted by the Institute of Ars Vivendi.

I was also with Tateiwa when he presented a paper at the Taiwan Sociological Society Congress in Hualien in November 2016, in a session titled “Disability Studies in East Asia: Current Status and Challenges.” This was part of our broader effort to deepen collaboration with the Taiwanese disability studies community. Ahn Hyosuk from South Korea, another of Tateiwa's doctoral students, also joined us on this journey.

When Professor Zhang and other members of the Wuhan disability studies community approached Ritsumeikan University in 2018 to host the Conference on Disability, SOGIE, and Equality in Asia, Tateiwa, as always, was highly supportive of this international initiative. In August of that year, participants from India, Nepal, Myanmar, Vietnam, China, South Korea, and other Asian countries gathered in Kyoto. The conference played a crucial role in the preparation of “Disability, Sexuality, and Gender in Asia”, published by Routledge in 2023, with Prof. Zhang as one of the editors.

For the East Asia Disability Studies Forum 2020, Tateiwa had planned to hold the event back-to-back with the annual academic meeting of the Japan Society for Disability Studies (JSDS), which he was hosting in Kyoto. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this plan could not be realized, and the forum had to be held online.

Tateiwa's dedication to international exchange was also evident in his efforts to translate “On Private Property” into English. He personally financed the project, spending a significant amount of his own money, though regrettably, the book was ultimately published at his own expense.

I always wished that Tateiwa had published more in peer-reviewed journals such as “Disability & Society” and the “International Journal on Disability & Social Justice” (IJDSJ). In the fall of 2023, JSDS invited Professor Angharad Beckett, a professor at the University of Leeds and Editor-in-Chief of the IJDSJ, to Japan. I had the opportunity to introduce Tateiwa’s achievements to Prof. Beckett, whose work, “Citizenship and Vulnerability: Disability and Issues of Social and Political Engagement” explores themes of weakness and vulnerability. To my delight, she expressed interest in Tateiwa’s “Freedom to Be Weak”. One wonders how his ideas would have been received had they gained much greater international exposure beyond Korea, where some viewed him as a charismatic figure.

Tateiwa’s international outlook was also reflected in his intention to entrust Dr. Mark Bookman with carrying forward his work at Ritsumeikan. Dr. Bookman, an American historian specializing in Japanese disability policy, passed away from heart failure on December 16, 2022, at the age of 31 – just six months before Tateiwa. Born with a form of muscular dystrophy, Dr. Bookman had received a heart transplant at age 10. At the time of his passing, he was a postdoctoral fellow at Tokyo College, University of Tokyo, and a visiting scholar at the Institute of Ars Vivendi. He was also a board member of the Society for Disability Studies (SDS) in the USA and one of the first international committee members of JSDS. At the East Asia Disability Studies Forum 2021, which JSDS co-organized under the theme COVID-19 and Disability in East Asia, Dr. Bookman presented a report in Japanese titled “A Historical Analysis of COVID-19 and Strained Support Systems for Disabled People” in Japan. Tateiwa gave the opening remarks at this online seminar.

Tateiwa’s global vision was further evident in his role as a board member of the Africa Japan Forum and his extensive writings on Africa, including “Ryugi: Two Dialogues Facing Africa and the World to Reflect on How Our Country Has Come to Be and to Consider the Future”.

From the perspective of social structures and the social model of disability, barriers exist in every society, and these challenges transcend national borders. For this reason, Tateiwa Shinya was inevitably driven to engage in international discourse, naturally becoming a global figure and demonstrating international leadership. More than anything, he genuinely enjoyed international activities and exchanges. I can still picture him in Seoul, happily sharing samgyeopsal, a tasty grilled pork belly, with his Korean colleagues during an international disability studies seminar. This attitude was one of the many invaluable legacies he left behind.

Notes

This essay is based on Nagase Osamu (2024) “Tateiwa Shinya and International Vision”, Shogaigaku kenkyu no. 21, (長瀬修、2024 年、「立岩真也と国際性」『障害学研究』21、209-215.)