

Otaru Literary Museum

小樽文学館



Introduction

Otaru was the center of the economy and one of the biggest fishery harbors in Hokkaido after the middle of the Meiji era (1868-1912).

A multitude of people who dreamed of making a fortune or finding new jobs came to Otaru from all over Japan.

Many of them settled down here and brought various cultures from their hometown.

Those cultures were mixed together, creating unique atmosphere in the new community.

Otaru was an economically and culturally rich city full of people with ambition, passion and intelligence.

A number of novelists, poets and literary scholars were born or lived here.

Otaru Literary Museum was founded in 1978 to acquire, preserve and communicate literature as cultural heritage through museographical codes, in order to promote knowledge about the literature and its role in the history of Otaru.

Explore and experience the wonder of writing and reading through our permanent collection and special exhibitions on writers from Otaru.

Representative Writers and Poets



Himerareshi Takuboku Iko
(Ishikawa Takuboku's Manuscripts Found
After His Death, published in 1947.)

石川 啄木

ISHIKAWA Takuboku (1886-1912)

Tanka Poet, Writer

Ishikawa Takuboku was a Japanese *tanka* (a 31-syllable Japanese poem) poet and one of the most famous literary persons who visited Hokkaido in its frontier days. He was born in Morioka, Iwate Prefecture. He contributed Western-style poems and *tanka* poems to *Myojo* (明星 The Morning Star), a famous literary magazine, when he was only sixteen years old, and became one of the promising young poets. However, he was forced to teach at an elementary school in Shibutami Village because his father, a chief priest, was suddenly banished from the Buddhist temple that he belonged to. Takuboku taught there only for one year, and then, he moved to Hokkaido to look for a job. He also needed some friends he could share his interest in literature with. He lived in Hakodate, Sapporo, Otaru and Kushiro, but failed to settle down and left Hokkaido after just one year.



One of the three memorials to Takuboku,
with his *tanka* engraved, in Otaru Park

Takuboku lived in Otaru from the end of September 1907 to January 1908 and worked as a reporter at *Otaru Nippou* (小樽日報 Otaru Daily news). While working there, he established a column for *tanka* for contributors, and wrote some satirical articles. But his work at *Otaru Nippou* lasted only three months. He quit his job suddenly because his was too ambitious and couldn't get along well with his colleagues.

After wandering around in Hokkaido, he left Kushiro for Tokyo and settled there. He worked at *Asahi Shinbun* (朝日新聞 Asahi newspaper) as a proofreader and began to create new style *tanka*. Some *tanka* composed by him a few years later, and related to Otaru, were printed in his first anthology, *Ichaku no Suna* (一握の砂 A Handful of Sand). Unfortunately, he contracted tuberculosis due to malnutrition from poverty and passed away at the age of twenty-six. His second anthology, *Kanashiki Gangi* (悲しき玩具 Sad Toys), was published two months after his death. There are three monuments to Takuboku in Otaru, and each one is engraved with his *tanka*.



Okada Saburo (fifth from the left) on the set of *The Yesterday's Roses*, 1930



Pari Hangyakusya no Kokuhaku
(Paris: The Confession of a Rebel, 1924)

岡田 三郎

OKADA Saburo (1890-1954)

Novelist

Okada Saburo was born in Matsumae, the old capital town of Hokkaido (previously called Ezo). His family was the head of a fishermen's group and very rich, but their fortune declined during Saburo's father's days. His family was the head of a fishermen's group and very rich, but their fortune declined... When he was fourteen, he moved to Otaru and lived with his uncle, Yamada Kichibe, who was the mayor of Otaru at that time.

Saburo's grades were excellent at school and he scored the highest marks when he entered Otaru Junior High School. However, he loved paintings so passionately that, as soon as he graduated, he left Otaru for Tokyo to study painting. Just after several months, though, another uncle in Tokyo persuaded him not to be a painter.

After that, Saburo became a tax officer, then, studied again at Waseda University, Tokyo, and wrote his first novel, making a brilliant debut as a Naturalism writer. Three years later, in an attempt to overcome writer's block, he moved to Paris in 1921 and lived there until 1923.

While there, he was inspired by expressionism, modernism, and *conte* (a genre of short story with wit and critical spirit).

He returned to Japan, introduced *conte*, wrote many novels in a variety of styles, including *conte*, and also worked as an editor for several literary magazines. He organized a group of modernist writers against Marxist writers called *Jusannin Kurabu* (十三人倶楽部 a club consisting of thirteen members). He also directed a movie, *The Yesterday's Roses*.

Saburo temporarily fell out of favor with both writers and the reading public after World War II because he was considered to have stood behind militarists during the war, but his creative activity continued until his death from tuberculosis in 1954.

Representative works: *Pari Hangyakusya no Kokuhaku* (巴里 叛逆者の告白 Paris: the Confession of a Rebel), *Bussitsu no Dandou* (物質の弾道 The Projectile Paths of Materials), *Aki Fuyu* (秋・冬 Autumn and Winter), *Shinroku Gyojyo-ki* (伸六 行状記 Notes about Sinroku's conduct).



Watercolor painting of the stage design for *The Body of a Holy Woman*, by Hayakawa Miyoji



Tsuchi to Hito (The Soil and Human, Hexalogy)

早川 三代治

HAYAKAWA Miyoji (1895-1962)

Novelist, Dramatist, Economist

Hayakawa Miyoji was born in Otaru. His grandfather, Hayakawa Ryoza, was one of the earliest merchants to contribute to the development of Otaru. When Miyoji was around fifteen years old, he began to admire an American democratic poet, Walt Whitman (1819-1892). He also adored Arishima Takeo (1878-1923), a rising contemporary novelist and an English professor who passionately introduced Whitman to Japan. Miyoji went on to Hokkaido Imperial University (now Hokkaido University) to study Economics and, fortunately, Arishima was his English professor. It was an opportunity for Miyoji to devote himself to literature.

After graduating, he studied economics at the University of Bonn and the University of Berlin, and influenced by German expressionist literary and dramatic arts. He stopped in Vienna on his way back to Japan and met the economist Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950), who suggested to him the importance of theoretical economics.

After returning to Japan, he taught economics at his alma mater, Hokkaido Imperial University. During the same period, he was recognized for his literary talent by a famous novelist, Shimazaki Toson (1872-1943), and was introduced to the Japanese literary world. While he pursued research in economics, he wrote many novels, short stories, and dramas. One of his representative dramas, *Atarasiki Nawa* (新しき縄 A New Rope), was once performed at the theater of the Imperial Hotel, Tokyo.

After World War II, he became an economics professor at Otaru University of Commerce. In later years, he taught at Waseda University. He was writing a series of long novels, *Tsuchi to Hito* (土と人 六部作 The Soil and Human, Hexalogy), about the history of pioneers and settlers in eastern Hokkaido, but it was never finished because he passed away suddenly in Otaru as a result of cerebral infarction in 1962.



Watercolor still life painted by Kobayashi Takiji in his high school days



Kani Kosen (The Cannery Boat) publicity poster

小林 多喜二

KOBAYASHI Takiji (1903-1933)

Proletarian novelist

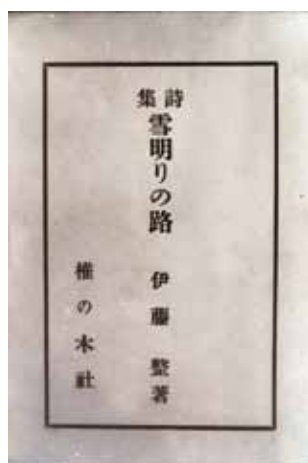
Takiji was born in Kawazoe Village (now Odate City) in Akita Prefecture. His parents were poor peasants and, when he was four, his family moved to Otaru. His uncle had already moved there and run a bakery business. Later, when he was an early teenager, Takiji lived with him and helped his business. He delivered bread to the customers and worked at the bread factory before and after school because he had to support his family. Takiji wanted to be a painter, but his uncle didn't like the idea. It was a tough life for young Takiji, and he started to see inequality and injustice around him in the society.

After he gave up on becoming a painter, Takiji began to write *tanka* and novels, and, while studying at Otaru Commercial High School (now Otaru University of Commerce), he gained a reputation as a brilliant writer in Otaru. He started to work at the Otaru branch of *Hokkaido Takushoku Ginko* (Hokkaido Colonial Bank) and, immediately thereafter, published a literary magazine named *Kurarute* (クラルテ Clarté, named after the novel written by Henri Barbusse, a French socialist) with his friends. He also released socialistic novels one after another—for example, *Bosetsu-rin* (防雪林 A

Snowbreak Forest), *1928 nen 3 gatsu 15 nichi* (一九二八年三月十五日 May 15, 1928), and his most famous novel, *Kani Kosen* (蟹工船 The Cannery Boat)—in some magazines. However, due to these left-wing, anti-government novels, he lost his job as a bank clerk in 1929.

Takiji went to Tokyo and became a communist sympathizer, and then, a member of Japan Communist Party. He was very active as a popular proletarian novelist, although he was kept under surveillance by the police and even arrested several times. In 1932, because of increasing crackdowns on communists and socialists, Takiji and his comrades were forced into underground activities. After he wrote

Tou Seikatsusha (党生活者 Living the Political Party Life) under an assumed name, he was betrayed, arrested and taken to the Tsukiji Police Station, Tokyo, on February 20, 1933 and tortured to death. The true cause was hidden until after World War II. However, some of his novels were translated into English posthumously and were read in foreign countries. Today, his literature monument stands on the hill near *Asahi Tenbodai* (Asahi Observatory) in Otaru.



Yuki-akari no Michi (The Snow Light Path, 1926)



Tokuno Goro no Seikatsu to Iken (The Life and Opinions of Tokuno Goro, 1941)

伊藤 整

ITO Sei (1905-1969)

Poet, Novelist, Translator, Critic, and Literary historian

Sei Ito was born in a small village in the southern part of Hokkaido, and a year later, his family moved to Shioya, the neighboring village of Otaru. He grew up there and, when he was fourteen years old, he started commute to Otaru Junior High School and, after graduating, to Otaru Commercial High School (now Otaru University of Commerce). He had excellent English-language skills and an enthusiastic love of poetry. To him, train ride between Shioya and Otaru meant a lot because, on the train, he spent precious time with his close older friends to talk freely about literature. They gave him important suggestions about poetry and literature, and he gradually came to think that he wanted to be a poet.

He self-published a lyric anthology titled *Yuki Akari no Michi* (雪明りの路 The Snow Light Path) in 1926. The book was rated highly, and he decided to go to Tokyo to begin a new life as a poet. However, at that time in Japan, lyric poetry was going out of fashion, and avant-garde poems were becoming popular. Sei gave up on becoming a poet and instead, started to translate English literary theories,

such as those on Herbert Read (1893-1968), James Joyce (1882-1491), and D. H. Lawrence (1885-1930). He finished translating Joyce's *Ulysses* in 1931, which inspired him to write his own novels.

Sei wrote many novels, essays, and literary criticisms. *Yuki no Machi* (幽鬼の街 A Town of Ghosts), *Tokuno Goro no Seikatsu to Iken* (得能五郎の生活と意見 The Life and Opinions of Tokuno Goro), and *Wakai Shijin no Syozo* (若い詩人の肖像 A Portrait of a Young Poet) are some of his most highly rated novels. In his later years, he wrote a book titled *Nihon Bundan-shi* (日本文壇史 History of Japanese Literary Circles), and became one of the founders of the Museum of Modern Japanese Literature, at Komaba, Tokyo.

The monument dedicated to him stands on a small hill called *Goroda no Oka* (Goroda hill) near Shioya shore, Otaru, and his beautiful and sad lyric, *Umi no Sutego* (海の捨て児 An Abandoned Infant on the Sea), is carved on its surface.

Other Literary Figures from Our Collection



NAMIKI Bonpei



SAGAWA Chika



OHNO Yuriko



OGUMA Hideo



KAWAMURA Bun-ichiro

Authentic *tanka* (of thirty-one syllables) and *haiku* (of seventeen syllables) were written and recited in Otaru from the later nineteenth century onward. Many poetry parties were held in the houses of the wealthy, and then *tanka* and *haiku* gradually spread to the general public, especially to young, educated people. In the early twentieth century, Japanese poetry blossomed with innovative ideas. NAMIKI Bonpei (並木 凡平 1891-1941) and his group developed colloquial-style *tanka*. TANAKA Gorohachi (田中 五呂八 1895-1937) was one of the leading poets of modern *senryu* (satirical *haiku*) in Japan. ODA Kankei (小田 観螢 1886-1973) and TOTSUKA Shintaro (戸塚 新太郎 1899-1965) were two pioneers of *tanka* not only in Otaru but also in Hokkaido. At Otaru Commercial High School, a *haiku* society called *Ryokkyu Ginsha* (緑丘吟社 Green Hills Haiku Association) was formed and produced brilliant poets—for example, TAKAHAMA Toshio (高濱 年尾 1900-1979) and HIRA Bosetsu (比良 暮雪 1898-1969).

Based on such customs and literacy, Western-style poems flourished. OHNO Yuriko (大野 百合子 1908-1938) and SAGAWA Chika (左川 ちか 1911-1936) were both female poets

who died young; the former was a graceful lyric poet, and the latter was an intellectual modernist poet. OGUMA Hideo (小熊 秀雄 1901-1940), who was famous for his proletarian poetry, was also active in the fields of painting, drawing, criticism, and fairy tales. The major works of YOSHIDA Issui (吉田 一穂 1898-1973) were symbolical poetry fused with meditation and beautiful images. KAWAMURA Bun-ichiro (河邨 文一郎 1917-2004), one of the pioneers of contemporary poetry, wrote the lyrics of the 1972 Sapporo Winter Olympic theme song, *Niji to Yuki no Barado* (虹と雪のバラード The Ballad of Rainbow and Snow), which became very popular.

ISIHARA Shintaro (石原 慎太郎 1932-), who spent his boyhood in Otaru, became the youngest The Akutagawa Prize winner at the age of 23 for his debut novel. He was such a sensational figure in 1950s, and is still active today. A children's literature writer, YAMANAKA Hisashi (山中 恒 1931-) also spent his childhood in Otaru. He believes children's books must be as entertaining and amusing as possible. He is also well known for his research into postwar education in Japan.



Entrance



Reproduction of seats of the commuter train used by Sei Ito



Reproduction of Sei Ito's study



Self-serve café in Literary Museum

Information

Admission

- ☒ **Literary Museum** Adults: 300 yen
High School Students: 150 yen
- ☐ **Museum of Art** Adult: 300 yen
(in the same building) High School Students: 150 yen

*A combination ticket for both museums is available. The price varies according to exhibition. Please ask the staff.

Museum Hours

Tuesday - Sunday : 9:30 am - 5:00 pm

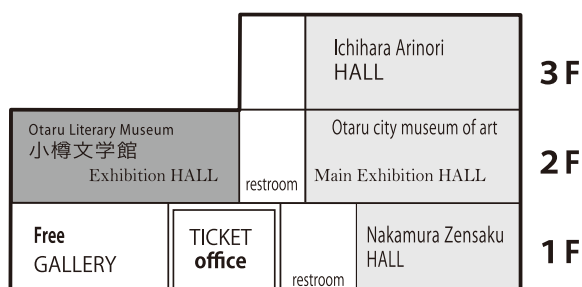
last entry : 4:30

(please enter at least 30 minutes before the museum closes)

Closed

On Monday, Tuesday if Monday is a national holiday and New year holidays (December 29 to January 3)

Please note that some special events may affect these hours.



Location

1-9-5 Ironai Otaru, Hokkaido 047 0031

Phone : 0134-32-2388

About 10 - 15 minutes' walk from JR Otaru Station

About 5 minute's walk from Chuo Bus Otaru Canal Terminal

Free parking space for 20 cars is available.

Please inform the staff if you would like to park in a disable spot.

