

Title	英文抄録
Sub Title	
Author	
Publisher	慶應義塾経済学会
Publication year	1977
Jtitle	三田学会雑誌 (Keio journal of economics). Vol.70, No.5 (1977. 10) ,p.1- 2
JaLC DOI	
Abstract	
Notes	
Genre	
URL	https://koara.lib.keio.ac.jp/xoonips/modules/xoonips/detail.php?koara_id=AN00234610-19771001-0084

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The Labour Movement and Intelligent People in the Thirties of the Meiji Era

by Kanae Iida

In the end of 19th Century Japan, the thirties' of the Meiji Era, we can find various types of intelligentia who took the varied attitude towards the social problems and labour movement. First, academician and especially professors who came back from Germany, under the deep influence of the German Historical School, for instance, Kenzo Wadagaki, Noburu Kanai and others.

Secondly, radical activists and thinkers who went over to the United States of America in 1870's and came back to Japan in 1890's are very prominent. Fusataro Takano, Jō Sentaro and Sen Katayama had been living in San Francisco where Takano and Jō and other radicals made an association called 'Shokko-Giyukai' (Association of Valiant Japanese Workers). Their coming back was a great encouragement to Japanese working people.

Finally, Teiichi Sakuma and Guennosuke Yokoyama are very important. Sakuma was the director of 'Shuei-sha', the famous and the first-rank printing-company. He had very sincere interest in the labour conditions of the working classes and endeavoured in improving his employees' personalities and elevating their social status. Therefore he was often nicknamed as 'Robert Owen of Japan'. He encouraged to make a trade union among printers and was seriously disappointed by the laziness and indulgence of the workers.

Guennosuke Yokoyama who started as a Journalist was very deeply impressed with Sakuma's thought and behaviors, and with his help he wrote many brilliant essays and articles. 'The Underworld of Japan' 1903 is very famous among students of social problems.

In this essay, the writer endeavours to follow the relationships among these radical thinkers and activists and the difference of their attitudes towards Japanese working classes.

The Flint Glass Makers in the Classic Age of the Labour Aristocracy, 1850-1880 (2)

by Takao Matsumura

Chapter I The Flint Glass Trade and the Flint Glass Makers

- I. The Development of Glass Making before 1850
- II. Glass Making in the Third Quarter of the Nineteenth Century

The history of the flint glass industry in the third quarter of the nineteenth century has three major characteristics. First, the flint glass trade experienced a golden age of prosperity over the period, though occasional recessions took place. This provided a necessary condition for the achievement by flint glass makers of the position of Labour aristocrats. Second, the pattern of regional distribution in the flint glass trade which had emerged by the mid-nineteenth century was strengthened and consolidated; the West Midlands, particularly Stourbridge, became more significant as the centre of flint glass making. However, the appearance of pressed glass in the Newcastle area was a new feature after mid-century. Since pressed glass production required less skill, it began to threaten the skilled blown flint glass makers in other areas. Finally, apart from pressed glass production, the development of the flint glass trade was achieved without adopting any technical innovations which would have involved drastic changes in the production process. Blown flint glass makers continued to rely upon the traditional skill which had been used for centuries. The size of factories continued to be small and the "chair" system remained as the unit of production. All these factors helped to sustain the old artisan consciousness.