

The fear of others — *taijinkyōfu*: Emergence, development and demise of a psychiatric diagnosis a virtual lecture by Sarah Terrail Lormel

During a period that roughly coincides with the Shōwa era, *taijinkyōfu* 対人恐怖症 or “interpersonal phobia”, has been a common diagnosis for Japanese psychiatrists, defined as a form of anxiety that develops in the presence of other people and leads to the avoidance of interpersonal relationships. Although it closely resembles what contemporary international classifications call “social anxiety disorder” and “social phobia”, *taijinkyōfu* has attracted much attention in Japan at a time when this condition was virtually absent of psychiatric and psychological literature elsewhere. How is *taijinkyōfu* different from mere shyness? Can it be cured or does one have to learn to live with it? Are there delusional forms of shyness? Is Japanese society a particularly fertile ground for this condition? These are the questions that have driven Japanese psychiatrists for decades. Proposing a clinical deconstruction of this diagnosis, this lecture will analyze the theoretical, institutional and intellectual factors underlying the fortune of pathological shyness in Japanese psychiatry, from its first becoming the object of medical scrutiny in the 1930s, through its success during the high economic growth era as a typically Japanese neurosis, until its slow demise from the 1990s.

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pictures from left to right: *Asahi shinbun* cut outs from 1964, 1935, 1939, 1975 and a photograph showing Shoma Morita (1874–1938).



Sarah Terrail Lormel is lecturer in Japanese studies at INALCO (Paris) since 2019. She holds a PhD in Epistemology & History of Science from INALCO with a dissertation on *A Japanese History of neurosis - Interpersonal phobia (taijinkyōfu) 1930-1970* (2018). She was Junior Fellow of the Japan Foundation in 2012-2013 at Keio University. Her field of research is the history of psy disciplines in modern and contemporary Japan, focusing on the evolution of nosology and therapies, and the global circulation of concepts and practices.