**Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Michel-Zaitsu**

## Pathological interactions − Ludwig Aschoff (1866-1942) and Tawara Tsunao (1873-1952)

Cardiologists all over the world are familiar with the “Tawara-Aschoff node” or “Aschoff-Tawara node” as the eponym of what is nowadays called atrioventricular node. The discovery of this small mass of specialized cardiac muscle fibers was a breakthrough in research on the “conduction system” of the heart. Since the 1990s, “Tawara-Aschoff Symposia” are alternately organized in Germany and Japan to commemorate the highly successful research of a Japanese physician under the auspices of a young but already renowned German professor of pathology.
Joint scientific endeavours during the Meiji-Era were not easy, taking into account the nationalist and ethnocentric thinking on both sides combined with a lack of experience in crosscultural exchange. This paper gives an outline of Tawara’s and Aschoff’s biographical background before tracing their difficulties in achieving mutual understanding during Tawara’s 3 years research in Marburg. Two books printed in 1906, one written by Tawara, the other one being a joint publication, added to Aschoff’s reputation and led to Tawara’s appointment at the Fukuoka Medical College (since 1911 Faculty of Medicine, Imperial Kyushu University). The scholarly exchange between German and Japanese medical circles survived the frictions caused by World War I. Despite an international postwar boycott movement Aschoff was invited to Japan by former students in 1925. A report on this journey and the state of Japanese medical education and health care presented by Aschoff to the “General Protestant Missionary Association” in Berlin reveals that he had undergone a learning process – at least in respect to Japan and the Japanese.

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