

# Was Hachiko Really a Faithful Dog?

Masaru MIZOGUCHI

Professor, Department of Agricultural and International Studies, The University of Tokyo

## 1. Encounter with the statue of Hachiko

The statue of Hachiko, the faithful dog, in front of Shibuya Station in Tokyo is a famous meeting place. When I entered the University of Tokyo 45 years ago, I heard a story about a dog that waited here for 10 years after its owner died, and I wondered if such a dog existed.

## 2. Agricultural Engineering and Professor Ueno – Testimony of Professor Takenaka

When I was a third-year student in the Department of Agricultural Engineering at the Faculty of Agriculture, I learned that Hachiko's owner was Professor Hidesaburo Ueno of the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Tokyo, the founder of agricultural engineering (Nougyodoboku) in Japan. Professor Hajime Takenaka, who was the fifth generation professor counting from Professor Ueno, said in a lecture on agricultural engineering, "You guys must think Hachiko is a faithful dog, right? Actually, it is said that Professor Ueno often took Hachi, a puppy, to a yakitori restaurant in front of Shibuya Station to discuss agricultural land development with his students who were officials of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. When he was so absorbed in the discussion that he forgot about Hachi, the hungry Hachi would growl and the owner of the yakitori restaurant took pity on him and gave him some leftover food. I heard this story from my professor when I was a student," he laughed. Hearing this story made me think that Hachiko was just an ordinary dog, and I became more attached to him.

## 3. Unveiling Ceremony of Hachiko and Dr. Hidesaburo Ueno – Testimony of an 86-year-old grandmother

It was common knowledge to graduates who studied agricultural engineering that Hachiko's owner was a professor at the University of Tokyo, but we did not particularly advertise it. However, Professor Ichinose of the Philosophy Department of the Faculty of Letters, while researching "death and life" after the Great East Japan Earthquake, knew first time that the owner was a professor at the University of Tokyo, and proposed the formation of a "Hachiko and Dr. Hidesaburo Ueno Statue at the University of Tokyo" group. Happily, we alumni joined the group and began to collect donations. On March 8, 2015, 80 years after the anniversary of Hachiko's death, the statue was unveiled.

An 86-year-old grandmother who had touched Hachiko was invited to the unveiling ceremony. I secretly asked her, "I have heard that Hachiko liked yakitori (grilled chicken). She replied, "That's right, I love Hachiko so much that I ask my father every day when he comes home, 'How was Hachiko today? He would say, 'He was at a yakitori restaurant today, too. And when I said, "I envy Hachiko is lucky to eat yakitori," my father said to me taking money out of his pocket. "Here, eat yakitori with your mother." "Thanks to Hachiko, I ate yakitori for the first time and thought that there was such delicious food in the world". We remember the first time we ate something delicious. Hearing her story convinced me of Hachiko's love for yakitori and made me love him even more.

#### 4. Hachiko's organs on display at the Agricultural Science Museum – record of autopsy

Bronze statues of Hachiko and Professor Ueno are located to the left of the main gate of the Faculty of Agriculture of the University of Tokyo. The formalin-preserved organs of Hachiko, which were dissected on March 8, 1935, immediately after his death, and the autopsy record are displayed in the Agricultural Science Museum to the right of the main gate. In the seventh line of the autopsy report, which describes the circumstances of the autopsy, there is a record of the physical evidence: "In the stomach, there was a white paste-like substance, three 5cm long bamboo sticks with sharp points and one with blunt ends".

#### 5. Hachiko's Life: Militarism and Propaganda

Hachiko lived through the era of Japanese militarism, and in January 1924, he came to Dr. Ueno's house from Odate City, Akita Prefecture. In 1934, the story of Hachiko, the faithful dog, was included in a textbook for the second grade of elementary school students throughout Japan, and a bronze statue of Hachiko was also made of him. The year of Hachiko's death, 1935, was a very important year for the University of Tokyo's Faculty of Agriculture, as the campus of the old First High School in Mukogaoka (Yayoi) and the main department of the Faculty of Agriculture in Komaba were exchanged. Two years later, Japan entered the Sino-Japanese War, and six years later, the Pacific War.

A faithful dog is defined as a dog that is faithful to its owner (Weblio Dictionary). To me, Hachiko seems more like a poor dog used for war propaganda than a faithful dog. Telling these facts is my Hachiko story.

## Profile of Faithful dog Hachiko

1923.11.10: Born in Odate City, Akita Prefecture

1924.1.14: Encounter with Dr. Hidesaburo Ueno

1925.5.21: Dr. Hidesaburo Ueno passed away suddenly

1932: "Itoshiya orai kenu monogatari" (Story of an old dog) (article in the Tokyo Asahi Shimbun newspaper)

1934: "Don't forget your debt to him" (a book for elementary school students)

"Statue of Hachiko the Faithful dog" (in front of Shibuya Station)

1935. 3. 8: Hachitaro dies.



(2015.3.8)

Photo: Two shots with an 86-year-old grandmother who has touched a live Hachiko



Left: Ueno Hachiko Ramen, which went on sale on November 1 at the cafeteria of the Faculty of Agriculture

Center: Puppy Hachiko sticker (issued monthly)

Right: Dr. Hidesaburo Ueno and the Hachiko Collection (page QR code)