

Meiji Japan in Global History Workshop

Sponsors

Duke University's Asia Pacific Studies Institute, the Carolina Asia Center, and the Global Asia Initiative

Abstract

Over the course of the past 150 years, Japan's Meiji era (1868-1912) has been cast and recast in narratives that have focused on change: the overthrow of the Tokugawa shogunate; the adoption of Western ideas and institutions; high-speed modernization, industrialization, and commercialization; and the rise of Japanese imperialism in Asia. Such change has at times been portrayed in unidirectional terms with Japan copying, following, and "catching up" to the Western world or with Japan's state agents taking action in Taiwan, Korea, and China.

It is only very recently, however, that change in the Meiji era is being visualized through a global lens. In the latest tellings, Meiji is not overdetermined by international forces but is created by individuals who both shape and are shaped by global processes. Seeing Meiji less as a nationally-bounded entity and more in relation to the transnational and border-crossing interactions this era enabled opens up the study of its history and historiography to new possibilities.

The workshop will start with Anne Walthall's keynote on the historiography of the Meiji Restoration. We will ask if and how Meiji signifies a moment of global connectivity and in what ways this twenty-first century starting point stimulates new questions and offers ways to reconceptualize Japanese engagement with the late nineteenth century/early twentieth century world. Moreover, it will ask what obstacles remain—including the nation-state itself (Meiji is an inherently nation-centered concept) and the imperialism in which its formation was embedded—and how they might help us distinguish our views from those our sources provide.

Schedule

Friday, November 10, 2017

4:30-5:30 pm Keynote: Anne Walthall, "Histories of the Meiji Restoration: Precursors to a Global Present?"
5:30-6:30 pm Reception

Saturday, November 11, 2017

9:00 - 9:15 am Coffee/Pastry
9:15 - 12:00 Panel 1
Aleksandra Kobiljski (CNRS/EHESS), "Meiji Japan in the Global 1860s: A Beirut-Kyoto Connection"

Takahiro Yamamoto (University of Heidelberg), "Crime, redress, and diplomacy in Sakhalin/Karafuto, 1867-1875"

David Ambaras (North Carolina State University), "Treaty Ports and Traffickers: Children's Bodies and Japan's Re-Opening to the Sinosphere."

Comments: Morgan Pitelka (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)

12:00-1:00 Lunch

1:00-4:00 Afternoon Session

Hannah Shepherd (Harvard University), “Fukuoka's Meiji migrants: between periphery, colony and the Asia-Pacific world, 1876-1910”

Catherine Phipps (University of Memphis), “Globe-Trotting and Nation-Building: A War Correspondent’s Perspective”

Simon Partner (Duke University), The Japanese Peace Movement in the Era of International Cooperation

Comments: Robert Stolz (University of Virginia)