

Japan and the World

Newsletter



From the Chair of Japanese Studies, October 2020

Greetings and welcome to our autumn 2020 pandemic issue. Before I delve into all of our recent activities, I would like to take a moment first to thank our outgoing chair, Professor Mickey Adolphson. He has worked tirelessly and produced fantastic results during the last five years. Over that short time span, Professor Adolphson crafted five new graduate level scholarships, established a new Japan-focused foundation in Japan, raised our international profile and helped us re-establish a strong brand name. (You can see that name emblazoned on our new facemasks that we currently wear during classes, when we can). We have also expanded on our Aoi Scholarship to include a partnership with Waseda University. Each year for the last few years we have attracted stronger and stronger applications at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Recently, with the sponsorship of the *Nikkei* newspaper, Professor Adolphson's new foundation, the Japan Global Research Center (JGRC), launched an inaugural international conference attended by more than eight hundred participants, demonstrating the strong links between Cambridge and Japan. Adolphson will stay on as co-chair of the faculty for another year before he plans to take two years of sabbatical to complete his next tome on the medieval trade of currency in East Asia.

For those of you whom I have not met, let me briefly introduce myself as the new chair of the Japanese Studies section. My name is Barak Kushner and I teach modern Japanese and East Asian history. I have been at Cambridge since 2006, and before that I worked for the US government and taught in the US. I can only hope to continue on the path already charted by Prof. Adolphson and try to make sure our sails remain full during what is proving to be the confusing times of the covid-19 pandemic. Last year I had the pleasure of being a Visiting Fellow at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Studies in Uppsala and managed to avoid worrying about the present by focusing on writing my next book. I am in the process of finalizing the manuscript but no longer have the luxury to ignore the challenges we face. We currently confront two potential incoming storms – the longer-term impact of the pandemic and its destabilization of routine life at the university, and the disquiet of Brexit, whose impact remains estimated to be deep and long-lasting but also unsure. How we weather these two storms will be an indication of how we can proceed and continue to grow and remain a vibrant Japanese studies section in the future.

This year we welcome 12 new undergraduates and 12 postgraduates. A majority of our postgraduates now receive scholarships from our internal bursaries or external foundations and we aim to continue to build those support systems.

While the situation within the physical faculty building had been quiet over the last few months during lockdown, the staff and leadership were hard at work planning for our students and instructors' return. We are not able to offer in person teaching in many formats due to limits on interaction, but it is permitted for small groups, one of our specialities. Over the enforced time away from our offices Dr Brigitte Steger, currently on sabbatical, was hard at work on her collaborative plastics project. She also chaired an international Zoom conference to launch her co-edited new work to publish high caliber undergraduate research. Dr John Nilsson-Wright kept up a high profile of politics-related activities at both Chatham House as well as online with organizations in Korea, and across the world. Dr Vicky Young has finalized two articles which will be coming out shortly in journals and has taken over as our undergraduate coordinator. Dr Kawabata Miki and Mrs Toshimi Boulding, our language instructors, labored over the summer to rechart our language programme around a new textbook to reflect changes in the student body.

Dr Laura Moretti ushered through her kuzushi-ji summer writing program online, and has been hard at work in her dual position as secretary of the degree committee, renovating the administrative processes through which graduates enter Cambridge. Our postdoctoral researcher, Dr Joshua Batts, will continue to teach our Japanese history course and one text class while pushing forward on his manuscript for publication next year. Dr KJ Chen, another postdoc, won a prestigious scholarship from the US that he hopes to use next year for research, and was assisting me on a digital mapping project of Japanese war crimes and the postwar geography of justice. Dr Christopher Tso, a newly minted PhD student of Dr Steger, will be assisting us by teaching a text class and gaining further teaching experience within the faculty.

We also have great news that will serve as a further bridge between Japanese Studies and the other sections within the faculty. We are pleased to announce that AMES has hired Dr Nuri Kim who will join us from January 2021 as our new lecturer in Korean Studies. Dr Kim has a PhD from Harvard University, and currently holds a postdoctoral position at Johns Hopkins University.

Readers can see our slightly unusual inductions for both the undergrads and graduates in photos I took during the events. Please do not forget to join us for our Monday evening seminar series which we are continuing this term, now online and starting from 6pm.

All the best,

Barak Kushner

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'BK' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Professor of East Asian History, Chair of Japanese Studies
Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

In this issue

Issue 11
October 2020

1. News

News from the Japanese Studies Subject Group and students, including recent research, publications and awards

2. Welcome to new students

Introductions from our new graduate students, and a welcome to all new and returning students

3. JGRC Conference

Professor Mickey Adolphson provides a report from the first JGRC international conference in September

4. East Asia Seminar Series

Talks we have coming up this term in our first ever virtual East Asia Seminar Series



Early Modern Japanese Transcription Project featured in *Yomiuri Shimbun*

Every year in August Dr Laura Moretti welcomes around thirty scholars for the [Summer School in Japanese Early Modern Palaeography](#). Graduate students join more seasoned academics, museum curators, and librarians driven by the same desire: to learn how to decode Japanese early modern documents.



With the world hit by a pandemic of the proportions of Covid-19, we had little choice but to postpone the seventh summer school to next year. At the same time, though, we wanted to engage those who had been admitted to the 2020 summer school. We, therefore, decided to launch the transcription project "[Tackling Pandemics in Early Modern Japan](#)", in collaboration with Prof Hashimoto Yuta (National Museum of Japanese History). Using the transcription platform *Minna de honkoku*, developed by Prof Hashimoto and powered by the use of Artificial Intelligence, the project enables participants to transcribe a sizeable number of early modern materials dealing with measles, cholera, and smallpox. Launched in June 2020, it will run until the end of the year with a view to make the transcriptions available publicly at that stage.

The project has attracted attention from media in and outside Japan, featuring in the [Yomiuri shimbun](#) and in the series "[Teaching Moments](#)" co-presented by the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science ON CALL project and the Teach311 + COVID-19 Collective. You can read in detail our pedagogical choices and challenges in the series "Teaching Moments" and you can also enjoy more information in the videos available on our dedicated [YouTube Channel "Japanese Early Modern Palaeography"](#). Some of our graduate students, Elena Follador, Freddie Feilden, and Helen Magowan, as well as our fourth-year undergraduate student Joseph Bills, have been extremely active and have produced an impressive number of highly accurate transcriptions. It was a joy to see them in action!

Professor Kushner hosts and narrates documentary series on Asia-Pacific war crimes trials

The eight-part documentary series, produced by the Shanghai Media Group, was broadcast on Chinese TV in September.



An article on this documentary series in English is now available to read online [at shine.cn](#)

Invitations to Playful Reading

As well as running the Early Modern Japanese Transcription Project, Dr Laura Moretti also began work over the summer on a new collaborative project: "Invitations to Playful Reading: towards a New Paradigm for the Study of Graphic Fiction from Early Modern to Contemporary Japan", funded by the Cambridge-Stockholm Collaborative Research Grants Scheme. The first symposium took place on 23 September 2020.

<https://www.ames.cam.ac.uk/news/laura-moretti-awarded-grant-study-invitations-playful-reading-towards-new-paradigm-study>

Dr Vicky Young interviewed for Edinburgh University's 'Voices in Japanese Studies' podcast

The podcast, created by PhD students in Edinburgh University's Japanese Studies department, seeks to "provide students with inspirational and informative interviews with Japanese Studies academics." The latest episode, featuring our own Dr Vicky Young, will be available shortly on Spotify. For links to previous episodes and more information go to [VIJS on Twitter](#)



Dr Nilsson-Wright chairs multiple webinars, provides insight and analysis in international media

Dr John Nilsson Wright has spent a busy summer providing analysis and insights to international news outlets, as well as chairing multiple online discussions on topical issues.

In May, as the world reeled from the first wave of Coronavirus, Dr Nilsson-Wright chaired the Chatham House webinar: [COVID-19 and the Future World Order](#) discussing the potential geopolitical implications of the pandemic.

In July the [Webinar: Responding to COVID-19: Lessons from South Korea and the UK](#), again hosted by Dr Nilsson-Wright, brought together parliamentarians from UK and South Korea to discuss their countries respective responses to the pandemic.

Later in the summer, as Roberto Azevêdo stepped down as director-general of the World Trade Organisation, Dr Nilsson-Wright hosted a conversation with South Korean candidate for the role, trade minister for the Republic of Korea Ms Yoo Myung-Hee: [Webinar: In Conversation with Minister Yoo Myung-Hee: Candidate for Director-General of the World Trade Organization](#)

Most recently, in a piece written for [Chatham House Online](#), Dr Nilsson Wright shifts his focus to Japan's new PM, and the course he may hope to plot in regards to foreign policy, economic reforms and constitutional revision.

Finally, we would like to congratulate Dr Nilsson-Wright on his appointment as [Korea Foundation Fellow at Chatham House](#). He is the first holder of the newly established position.

Cambridge Japanese Studies undergrad awarded Ivan Morris Prize 3rd year in succession

We would like to congratulate recently graduated alumna Tessa Rizzoli who has been awarded second place in the [Ivan Morris Memorial Prize](#). Tessa also received a Certificate of Commendation at the Outstanding Student Contribution to Education Awards, run by the Cambridge Centre for Teaching & Learning.

Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies to welcome new Korean Studies lecturer

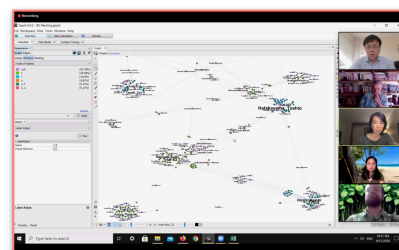
We are pleased to announce that Dr Nuri Kim is expected to join the Faculty of Asian & Middle Eastern Studies in January 2021 as a University Lecturer in Korean Studies.



From Dr Kim's staff profile on Johns Hopkins website: Nuri Kim is a historian with an interest in the cultural, intellectual, and religious history of modern Korea and beyond. His current research focuses on new religious movements, alternative knowledge, and fringe groups, as well as their relation with mainstream society and transnational trends. Previously, Nuri was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Pennsylvania where he taught courses on Korean as well as East/Southeast Asian history. Nuri also served as a research fellow at Seoul National University's Kyujanggak Institute and received his Ph.D. in History and East Asian Languages from Harvard University.

Prof Kushner and Dr Chen run international workshop

The workshop was the second workshop based on Prof Kushner's Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation-Newton Trust project: "Charting the Geography of Power: Visualizing the Shifting Landscape from Imperial to Postwar East Asia through War Crimes Trials."



For further information about the workshop please see the news item on the [FAMES website](#).



Joint research project awarded Cambridge Global Humanities Research Grant

A new research project devised by Dr Vicky Young and Prof Barak Kushner, 'Decolonising East Asian Studies: Rewriting the Boundaries of Region, Nation, World' has been awarded a Cambridge Global Humanities Research Grant.

“ This project proposes fresh analyses for approaching modern East Asian Studies in light of recent calls within UK academia to decolonise the humanities. Although emerging initially within Faculties of English and Comparative Literary Studies, the last decade has seen scholars within Japanese literary studies, too, foregrounding contemporary writers who transgress national and linguistic borders through their multilingual writing practices. However, shortcomings are twofold: first, the motive to internationalise Japanese literature and culture has, also since the 1990s, been deeply rooted in promoting national interests, particularly in Europe and the US; second, the promotion of contemporary 'transborder' fiction as a new development has resulted in de-emphasising continuities between this recent generation and those writers who worked under the direct conditions and/or explicit historical legacies of Japanese imperialism in East Asia. As if to reinforce this point, as the shift towards 'transborder' fiction in Japan has been accompanied by scholars proclaiming the 'end' of ethnic Korean writing in Japanese, Korean literary studies have begun to embrace the latter despite considering such fiction as 'Japanese literature' until the late-1990s.”

“The challenge as we see it is to restore a historical dimension into contemporary discussions of decolonisation and transnationalism in East Asia that take their lead from movements—of people and texts—between geographical settings and languages in the present. We therefore seek to correlate more of the domestic histories of Japan, China, Korea and Taiwan, against a regional and international backdrop to ascertain a more holistic narrative of what the history of deimperialisation and decolonisation looks like when one does not presume a Eurocentric and/or Anglophone point of departure. We also seek to create new dialogues between the practices of history and literary analysis.”

With the Cambridge Global Humanities Research Grant Dr Young and Prof Kushner intend to host a one-day international workshop in Cambridge in 2021. The workshop will bring together historians and literary scholars working on texts and contexts related to post-1945 East Asia, in order to read across gaps between historical and literary scholarship and to devise more productive ways of interrogating the lines—geographical and theoretical— that demarcate Japan, Asia and the rest of the World.



Dr Chen publishes article in Cold War History

Dr Kuan-Jen Chen, post-doctoral researcher in FAMES, published his article “Projecting Poseidon’s Trident: America’s East Asia and the Shifting Contours of 1950s Postwar Naval Policy” in Cold War History (<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14682745.2020.1752676>).

Drawing on unpublished official documents from the US and Taiwan, Chen’s article argues that the crises in the western Pacific, particularly the Korean War and the First Taiwan Strait Crisis, led the Truman administration to alter its perception of maritime space. The US accordingly shaped international waters as a link tying Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan together by projecting its military influence. The western Pacific, for Washington, became the most strategically valued area, which was the frontier of the Cold War with the Soviet Union and its Chinese comrades.

Welcome to our new students

Tom Booth PhD



Tom's research explores the causes and motivations of popular unrest in medieval Japan. He is particularly interested in exploring historical methods of approaching the study of protest, and in grappling with questions of structure and agency. His research will be based primarily on the diary entries of monks and noblemen living in Kyoto and Nara, bakufu edicts, and the limited record of events produced by the protesters themselves.

Rashaad Eshack PhD



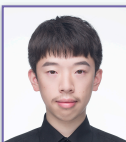
Rashaad's research examines the ways that education impacts Japanese diasporic identity construction in Japanese-American, Nikkei, communities. He aims to develop a transnational, historical dissection of the international, national, and community forces that influence the formation of education systems available to Japanese-American children, and the ways in which those schools impact migrant identity. To that end, and in order to transcend a bilateral US-Japan focus in Japanese diaspora studies, he incorporates sources from the US, Japan, and Latin America.

Freddie Feilden PhD



Freddie is looking at strategies of adaptation in 19th-century Japanese popular literature, with a focus on picturebook genres such as *yomihon* and *gōkan*. Through analysing the transformations in content and format, he aims to clarify the connections between narrativity, temporality, text and image on the page - ultimately considering what these creative rewritings may tell us about the relationship between commercial publication and the evolution of readership from late Edo into the Meiji period.

Weijun Xu PhD



Weijun's research focuses on the influence of nationalism on foreign policies as he seeks to explain why a country/region whose regime legitimacy largely depends on nationalism sometimes adopts policies not in line with nationalist opinions when it falls into disputes with another country/region. Weijun's research focuses mainly on countries and regions in East Asia.

Jonathan Yeung PhD

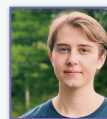


Jonathan intends to investigate how nationalistic identities developed amongst the Chinese student community in Tokyo during the early 20th century. By examining student publications as well as official documents and records, Jonathan hopes to place the students' explorations of identity in a global context, and elucidate the impact of the students' experience of Japan on wider events happening in China.

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome all of our new and returning undergraduate Japanese Studies students. With many classes now being taught online, and social distancing measures in place in the faculty building, Michaelmas Term promises to be a new experience for all of us.



Peter Adolfsson MPhil



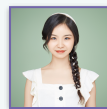
Peter's research will look at Japan's contemporary relationship with Africa and the policy aims it has on the continent, in the context of Chinese competition.

Mark Chen MPhil



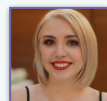
Mark's research will look at the development of chemistry in Meiji Japan, focusing on its evolution as an academic subject in general and in higher education.

Tian Gao MPhil



Tian will look for patterns in the roles played by Yōkai in *Kusazōshi*, to include cognitive, emotional and educational applications, helping to offer a deeper analysis of these roles and patterns clarifying how authors in the Edo period viewed childhood and explored the interaction of nature and humanity.

Melissa Lewis MPhil



Melissa's research focuses on Japanese video games, and on analysis of them in a cultural context. Her MPhil dissertation will read *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild* as trauma literature and situate the game's themes alongside other post-3.11 writing.

Hester Mullen MPhil



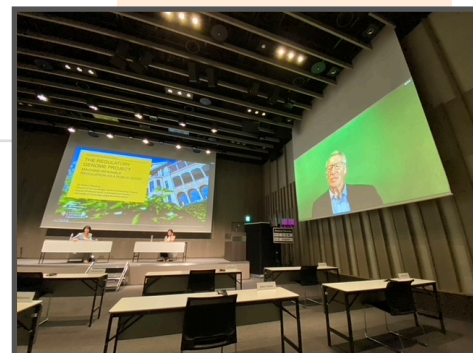
Hester's research will look at AI storytelling in Japanese science fiction literature, and the way in which Japanese SF authors use cinematic, and visual techniques in their writing.

Japanese Studies at Cambridge creates new foundation in Japan

In March of this year, Professor Mickey Adolphson co-founded the Japan Global Research Center in Japan (www.jgrc.org). The JGRC is a non-profit organisation that aims to bring researchers from Japan and Cambridge together to tackle the kind of big problems that require collaboration across national and academic boundaries.

On 23 September a virtual conference was held in Tokyo, co-organised with the *Nikkei Shimbun* and sponsored by MUFG, SBI Holdings, Material Works and Softbank. Following an opening speech by Professor Adolphson in which he highlighted the benefits of research collaboration, researchers from Cambridge and Japan, including those from industry and academia, discussed potential projects in four panels: ageing society, digital transformation, finance, and sustainability. From the Cambridge end, our own Dr Brigitte Steger spoke about her plastics project, Dr Louise Lafortune (School of Public Health) about ageing society, Dr Robert Wardrop (Judge Business School) about financial regulatory data, Dr Simon Learmount (Judge Business School) about corporate governance, Professor Frank Stajano (Computer Science) about digital transformation, and Dr Gerhard Fasol (Trinity in Japan Society President) issues focused on energy.

More than 800 people attended online throughout the evening, and with the announcement of a donation of ¥10 million from Mr Kitao of SBI Holdings, the center has already gotten off to an excellent start.



Japanese Studies group welcomes METI researcher to Cambridge

As an illustration of the connections we hope to forge with the new JGRC, Japanese Studies is very pleased to welcome our first visiting researcher from Japan's Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI).



Mr Nakatomi Daisuke arrived in mid-September and will be exploring the various research projects under way at Cambridge as well as potential future collaboration between Cambridge and METI. This initiative, spearheaded by our newly founded Japan Global Research Center, is one step in our efforts to connect the research environments in Japan and at Cambridge and ultimately increase the number of collaborative projects.

Mr Nakatomi writes that he is very pleased to join us in Japanese Studies at Cambridge. He is looking forward to investigating the abundant and sophisticated research resources Cambridge has to offer, and to exchanging knowledge about Japan.




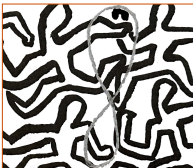

East Asia Seminar Series



With the start of a new term, and a new academic year, we introduce a vibrant list of talks in the East Asia Seminar Series. The series kicked off on 12 October with a fascinating talk from Professor Andrew Gordon of Harvard University: *Modern Memories: The public history of industrial heritage in Japan*. This was followed on 19 October by KU Leuven's Professor Dimitri Vanoverbeke, whose talk, *The Limits of Change in Japanese Criminal Justice*, proved popular not only with staff and students here in Cambridge, but elsewhere in the UK and internationally.

Moving the seminar series online this term has had its challenges, but we are delighted with the level of international engagement, and the greatly expanded audience we can now reach. For more information on talks, and to register to attend please go to:

<https://www.ames.cam.ac.uk/whats-on/east-asia-seminar-series-michaelmas-2020>

MONDAY 2 NOVEMBER 6 PM (UK time)	DR OLEG BENESCH <i>University of York</i> JAPAN'S CASTLES: CITADELS OF MODERNITY IN WAR AND PEACE	
SATURDAY 7 NOVEMBER 12 NOON (UK time)	TATEKAWA SHINOHARU 立川志の春 // RAKUGO PERFORMANCE In this special event we are delighted to welcome Tatekawa Shinoharu to give a live streamed <i>rakugo</i> (Japanese comedy) performance. The performance will be in Japanese, with an English summary available beforehand on the FAMES website.	
MONDAY 9 NOVEMBER 6 PM (UK time)	PROF JAQUELINE BERNDT <i>Stockholm University</i> PLAYFULLY SERIOUS: HOLOCAUST MANGA IN THE AGE OF CONNECTIVE MEMORY	
MONDAY 16 NOVEMBER 6 PM (UK time)	DR CINDI TEXTOR <i>University of Utah</i> WHAT WAS ZAINICHI LITERATURE? - INTERSECTIONALITY, INCOHERENCE, AND 'POST-RACIAL' TEMPORALITIES IN JAPAN	
MONDAY 30 NOVEMBER 6 PM (UK time)	DR SARAH KOVNER <i>Columbia University</i> ALLIED POWS IN COLONIAL KOREA	

Seminars in Michaelmas Term 2020 will take place online via Zoom. Registration is required. Registration links will be made available on the '[What's on](#)' page of the FAMES website.

Seminars will start at 18:00 unless stated otherwise, please open the Zoom link 10 minutes beforehand.

We look forward to seeing you there!

The Japanese Studies Group gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Great Britain Sasakawa Foundation towards this seminar series

